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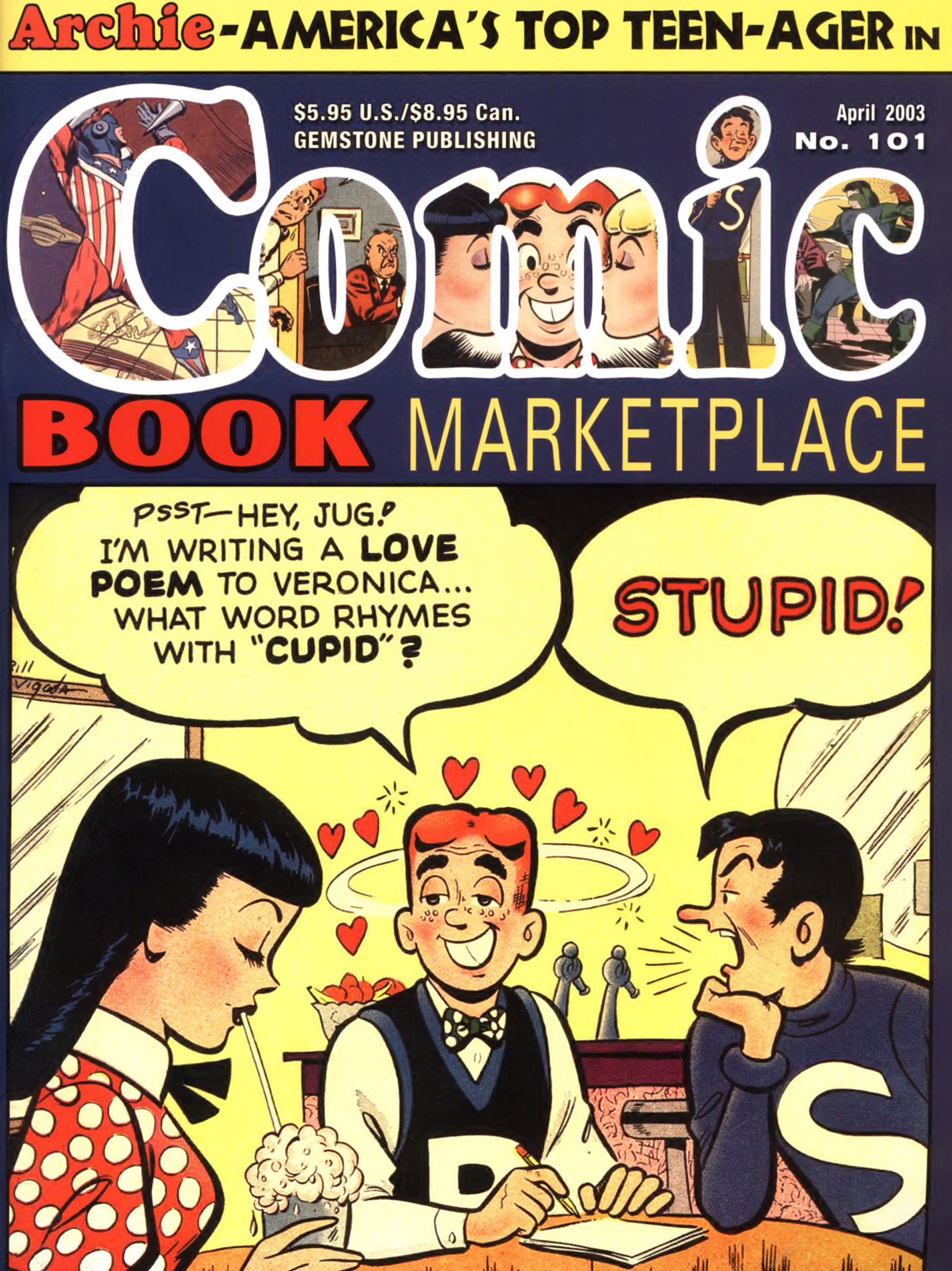

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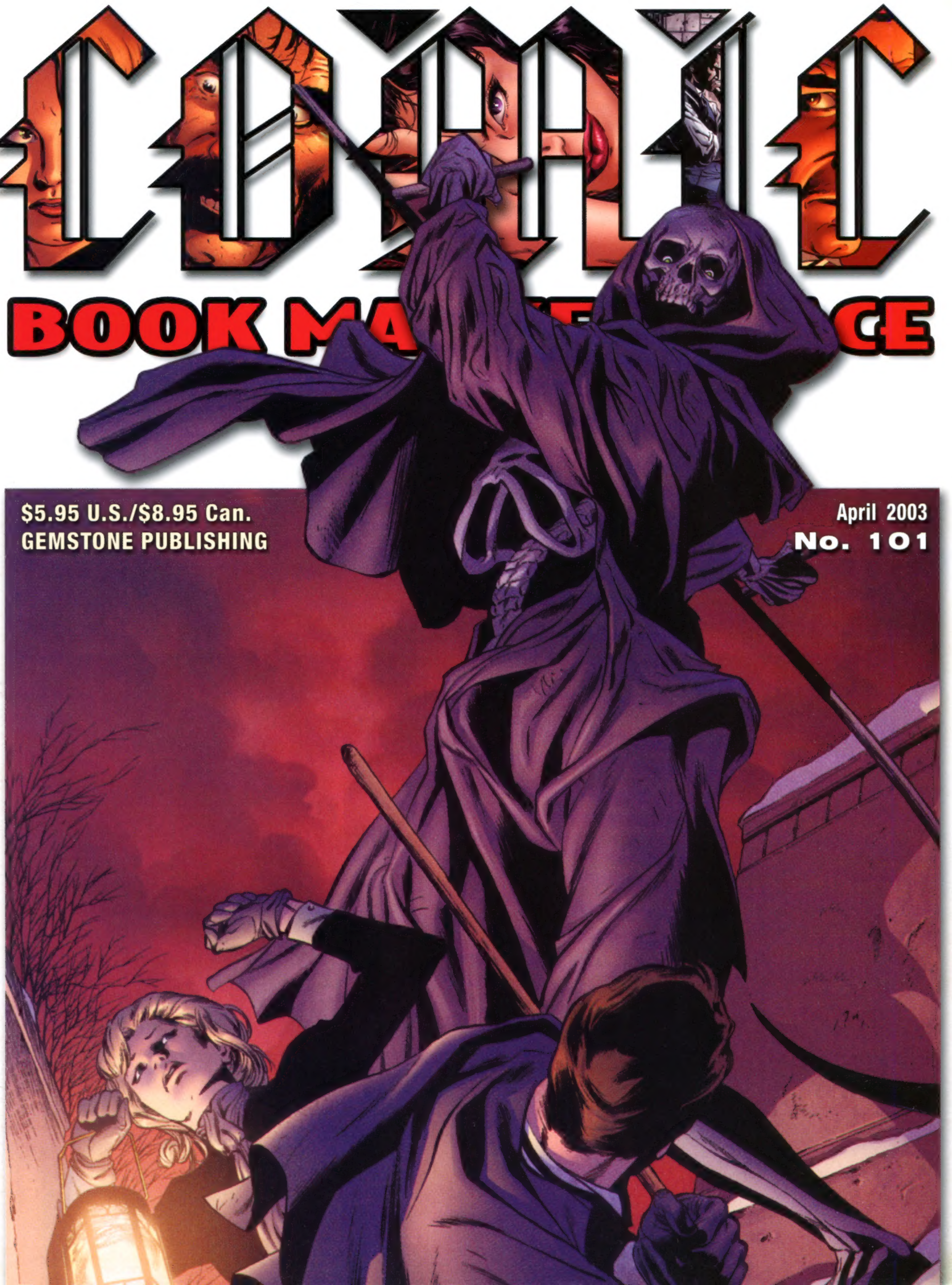

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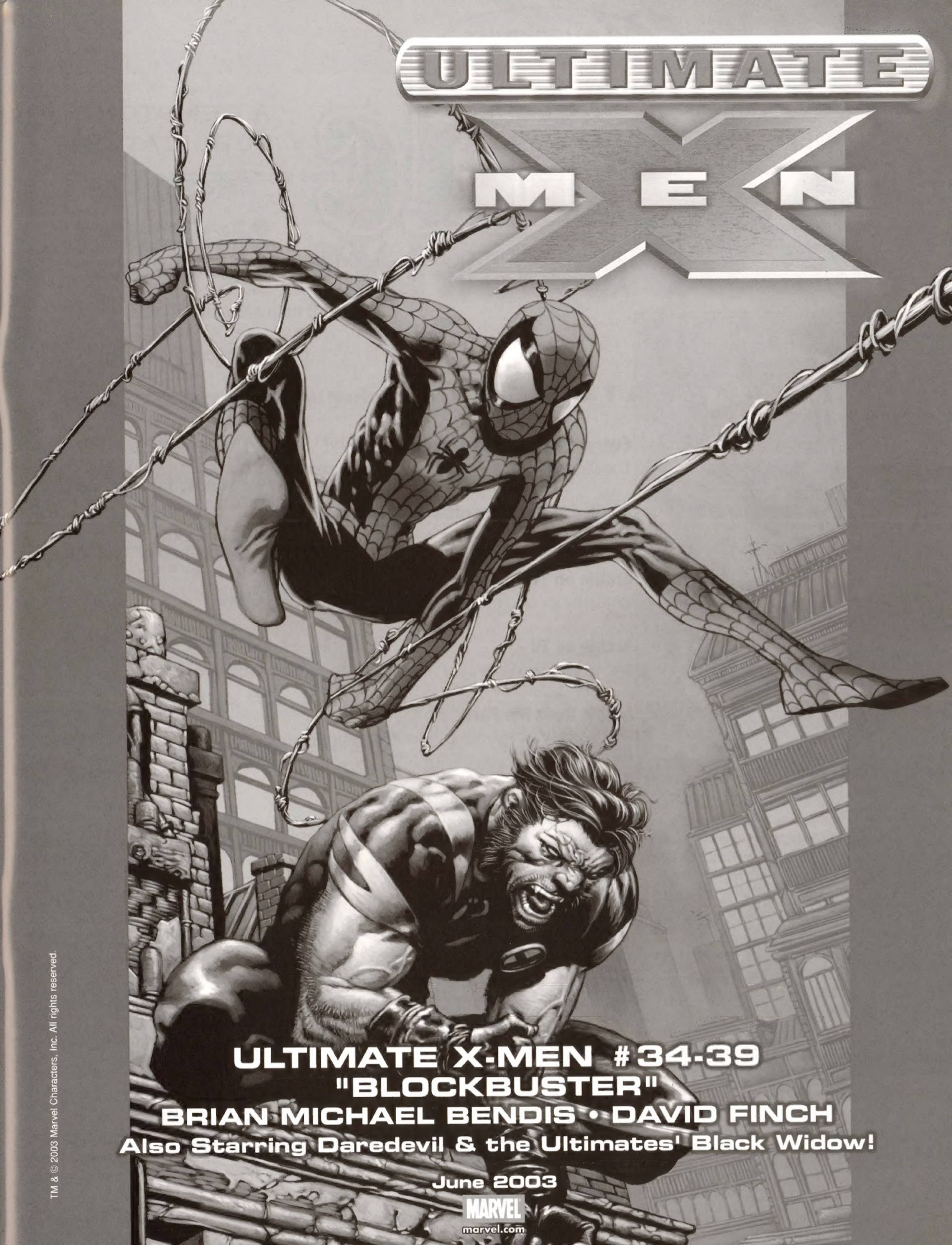

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Vol. 3 No. 101

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ONE MORNING IN A SWANK NEW YORK CITY TOWN HOUSE, AS WEALTHY LAMONT CRANSTON AWAKENS...
YAWN!
I'VE HAD ENOUGH SHUT-EYE! NOW FOR A QUICK BREAKFAST!
MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE CHEF, SHREVE! HE'S A CULINARY GENIUS! REMIND ME TO TRIPLE HIS SALARY!
NOW THAT I'VE INDULGED MY APPETITE, IT'S TIME FOR THE MORNING WORK-OUT THAT KEEPS ME IN TRIM!
A FEW TWISTS OF THE DIAL AND THE PROPER COMBINATION WILL OPEN THIS VAULT DOOR TO MY SOUND-PROOF SURVIVAL-COURSE ROOM! NOT EVEN MY CLOSEST EMPLOYEES KNOW WHAT GOES ON IN THERE!
THEN, AS THE MULTI-MILLIONAIRE STEPS INTO THE MYSTERY ROOM AND CLOSES THE PONDEROUS METAL DOOR BEHIND HIM...
OFF WITH MY CIVVIES! ENTER, THE SHADOW!
NOW TO RUN THE SURVIVAL-COURSE! I'LL EITHER KEEP ME IN TRIM...OR KILL ME! AH! ONE OF THE HIDDEN MACHINE-GUNS POPPED OUT!
SORRY! I'M ALREADY HAD BREAKFAST! I DON'T FEEL LIKE EATING LEAD!
RATA-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT
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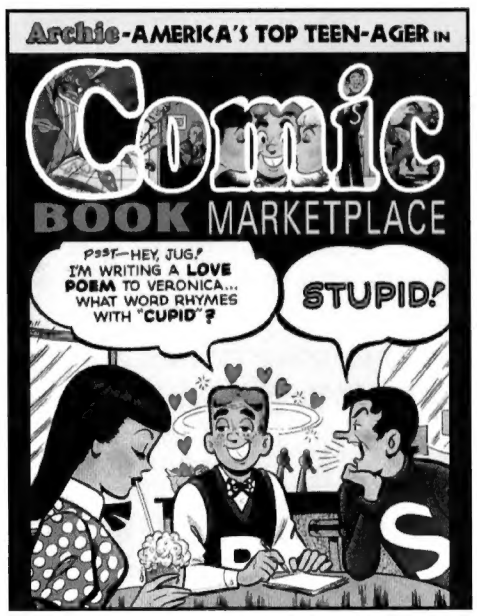
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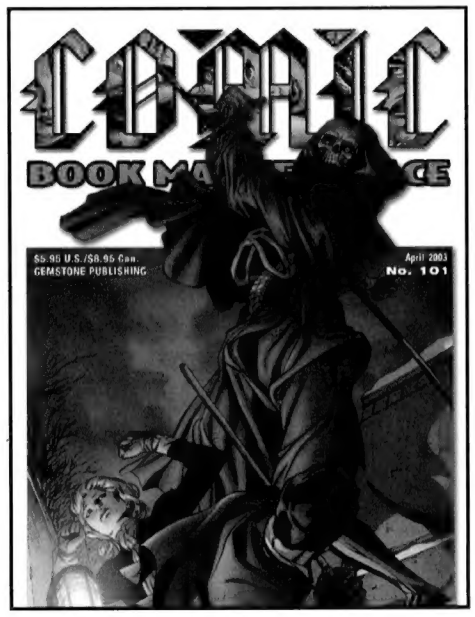

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Archie at 60:

America's Oldest Teenager, Barring Dick Clark, is Archie Andrews

With all the time spent looking for it throughout history, who would have thought the secret of eternal youth would be found in Riverdale? That's where it is, though, and Archie Andrews and his friends seem happy enough to keep that secret to themselves while sharing their trials, tribulations and milkshakes with generations of readers.

Founded in November 1939, the fledgling MLJ Magazines was named for its three founding partners, Maurice Coyne, Louis Silberkleit and John Goldwater. After testing the waters of competition with their own super-heroes in titles such as *Blue Ribbon Comics*, *Top-Notch Comics* and, in 1940, *Pep Comics*, they turned from supermen to an everyman.

In *Pep Comics* #22, surrounded by standard (albeit enjoyable) super-hero fare, there was a six-page story featuring Archie Andrews and his friends. Not too long after that, in 1942, Archie made the leap to his own title. By May 1946, the company changed its name to Archie Publications. Archie was, one might correctly surmise, a hit. In the 60 years since, Archie has been featured in more than 30 different comic book titles, on radio, and in cartoons, movies and TV shows. He's appeared in model kits, fan club kits, on cereal boxes, pinbacks, magazines, calendars and other character collectibles. The comics even inspired the creation of The Archies, a pop group that scored a couple of hit records (like *Sugar, Sugar*, originally intended for the Monkees!).

Archie has spawned spin-offs like Josie & The Pussycats and Sabrina The Teenage Witch, and he's even met The Punisher and lived to talk about it. What makes Archie particularly interesting, though, is that he really hasn't changed that much. Situations have been updated, but Archie remained basically untouched by the counter culture of the '60s, the "Me Generation" of the '70s or its better-dressed sequel, the '90s. In each case there were nods to the prevailing mores, but they were mainly of appearance in nature and not in substance. Archie was, and is, still what he was created to be—family entertainment.

The birth of the comic book specialty market, or direct market, precipitated a major decrease in the number of comics aimed at kids. Many publishers severely scaled back or flat-out abandoned their efforts to cultivate the next generation of comics readers. Archie Publications, however, did not. They achieved the kind of cool you only get to be when you're not worried about whether you're cool or not. They produce family entertainment, they're good at it, and they stick with what works (or, more precisely, what their readers want).

"It's what we do best," said Archie's Victor Gorelick. "What's out there for young readers today? Not much in comics. We produce a product that parents are comfortable giving to their children. Archie Comics has entertained six generations of readers and hopefully will for another six."

J.C. Vaughn
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MIKE WILBUR
Columnists

PRICING & MARKET REPORTS
ROBERT M. OVERSTREET
Senior Pricing Editor

MICHAEL NAIMAN
Market Reports Editor
mnaiman1@cox.net

MARK HUESMAN
Pricing Coordinator
feedback@gemstonepub.com

ADVERTISING
ANGELA MEYER
Traffic & Operations Manager
ec@gemstonepub.com
Toll Free (800) 322-7978

BRENDA BUSICK
Creative Director
bbrenda@gemstonepub.com

RESEARCH
JOE McGUCKIN
mjoe@diamondgalleries.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE & ADMINISTRATION
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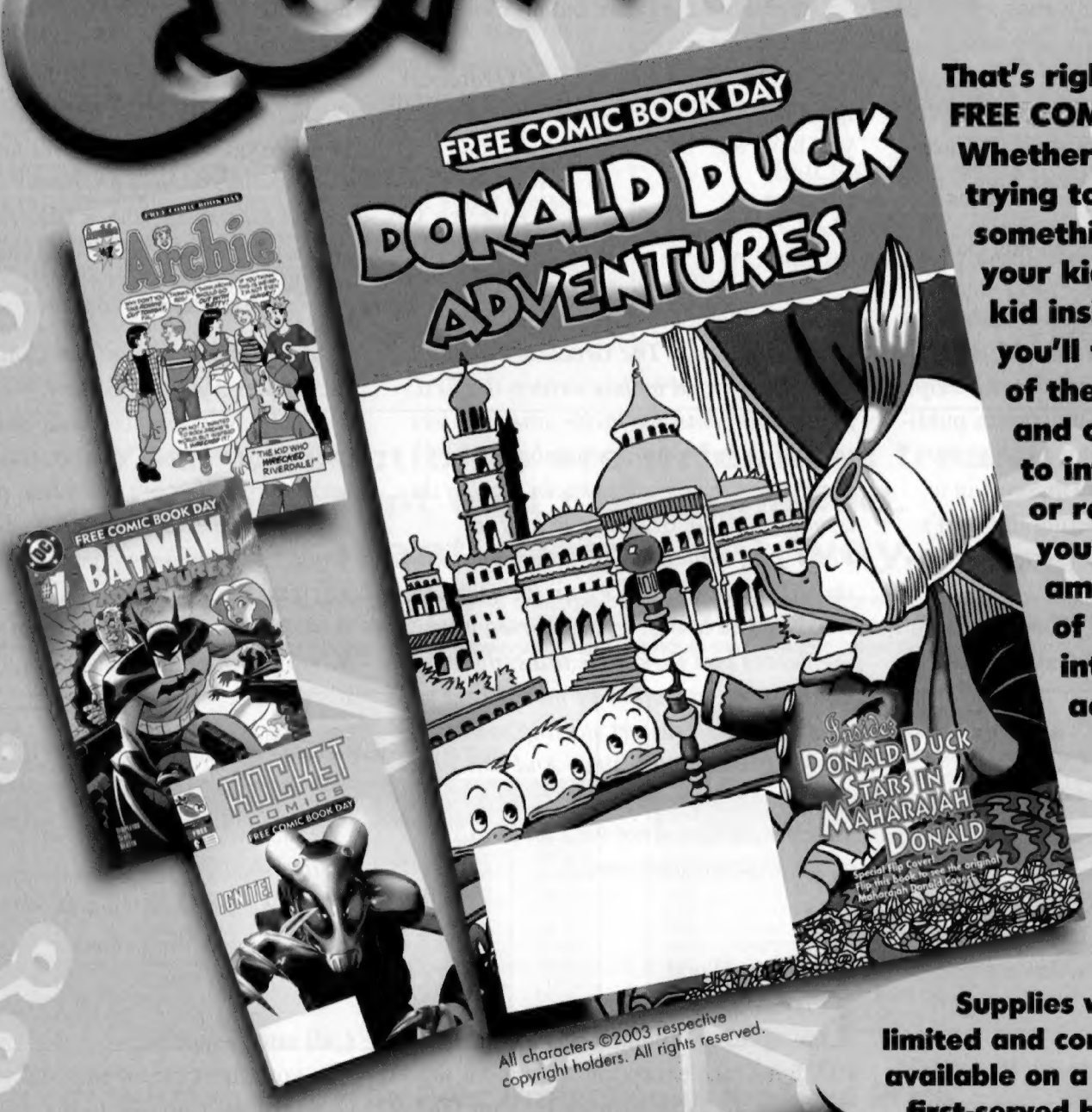

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Better late than never

Excellent job on your western issue. I appreciate it when *CBM* goes all out to explore a genre artist or title I'm not that familiar with. I usually end up adding to my want list. With their emphasis on the Gold and Silver age the last couple of issues are what I expect from *CBM*. I confess that a recent move made it impractical to fill out your survey in a timely fashion so I'll weigh in here:

"Oddball Comics": I love this stuff—the first place I go on the web.

Michelle Nolan: Absolutely—she does the research so we don't have to.

"Funnies Farrago": Yes! Classic strips are all too often ignored by comics publications

"The Frazetta-Phile": Uh, once in a while maybe, but considering the man's rather sparse comic book output, not every month.

"The Naiman Report": The first thing I read. Highly opinionated and therefore always entertaining.

"*CBM* Market Watch": I like the anecdotal sales info, and the magazine is called *Comic Book MARKETPLACE*.

"Marketplace Mail": The second thing I read—where the hell did it go.

"Collectable Character Statues": NO. Sorry, maybe if you had a column on vintage comic related collectibles in general—but the narrow focus of this feature leaves me cold.

"The Greatest Comic Book Ever": I like the idea, but it would be nice to read other fans' appreciation of their favorites from their youth.

As I wrote earlier, I enjoy features on 1940-1970 era comics the most, especially the more esoteric genres, titles and creators. I'm especially fond of the 1946-1954 period due to the amazingly varied output and general affordability to collectors of books from that era. I also believe that this is the period where comic book art finally began to move beyond the often dynamic but ultimately crude illustrations of the war era, into an art form worthy of more than historical and nostalgic appreciation.

Interviews are great, but no more than one per issue.

One last note: Just because Overstreet ignores underground comix doesn't mean you have to.

Richard Byard
Los Angeles, CA

I agree with a lot of what you say, Richard. While Mark Squirek came up with the idea of "The Greatest Comic Book Ever," and he has written the first few installments, we invite other readers to send in their short remembrances of their favorite comic books. In fact, in this issue is a "TGCBE" article by Tom Field. And I totally agree with you that we should concentrate more on the 1946-54 era of comic books. In this period of shifting genres and look-alike titles, there is a wealth of great stuff to be mined, and you are right about the art starting to improve markedly during this time. And I will ask our other readers to weigh in on the question of whether or not we should talk about underground comics.

RC

Details on Wood

I may be a bit late for this, as I am only now getting around to reading *CBM* #97, but I take exception to some of the "facts" in Todd Severin's article on Wally Wood and the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents.

Since Roger Hill pointed out a mistake of mine in a previous letter, I do the same for Mr. Severin.

1. Severin claims "In 1951, Wood took his work to publisher William Gaines." Wood and Harrison were doing EC stories since the late 1940s, and even if Harrison had been the contact and Wood did indeed show his work to Gaines alone, it is unlikely that it would've been as late as 1951, since solo Wood pieces were already appearing in EC comics at the end of 1950. Later on, he claims Wood tackled all genres for EC including western, and all Wood's western art appeared on the stands before 1951.

2. He later writes that Wood was "producing work for all of EC's titles." There is no Wood story art or cover art in *Psychoanalysis*, *Extra!*, *Terror Illustrated*, *Crime Illustrated*, *Shock Illustrated*, *M.D.*, *Impact*, *Crime Patrol*, *War Against Crime* or other titles all published while Wood was there.

3. "...where Lee or The Comics Code dictated everything he drew."

While Stan Lee has made some editorial judgments that I was not fond of, he let the artists lay out and often plot the stories themselves, which DC did not. If Wood had to make some changes in his art, it was not "everything he drew."

4. I have never read anything about Wood being a heroin addict, but I suppose it's possible.

Paul Wardle
Toronto, Ontario

Paul, we corrected the error about Wally Wood's drug use in the letters column in CBM *#100. Thanks for your letter!*

RC

Call and response

In your most recent editorial you mentioned the response to the questionnaire. You said that due to the lack of replies you must be doing things right or we would have filled it in and returned it. Upon reading this I felt the desire to contact you with my thoughts on the subject.

As a long time reader I have enjoyed

many articles and cover reproductions on subjects that are dear to my heart and others that I was happy to read, in some cases converting me. The magazine always gave me, a collector on a limited budget, the impression that wealth and collection size was irrelevant—we were all lovers of the medium. However after Gary Carter handed over the reigns I noticed almost straight away a shift away from mostly comics to covering artwork, toys and attitude. Okay, I thought, Russ does say in his editorial give him time to settle, so I did. Well, after a year or so things are not any better, I feel upon reading the book that I am intruding upon the exclusive magazine of elite collectors. CGC seems to be championed, and as a lover of *reading* comics it bothers me that the so-called "proper" collectors haven't criticized this practice. I am aware we live in a material world where, like it or not, having the best is respected. I myself would buy mint copies of comics if I could afford it, but fellow collectors (well, me anyway) aren't interested who has the best copy of *More Fun* #52. We wish to read about the comics, not look at photographs of collectors in the now wasted color section. Why isn't the color used for cover reproductions? Must money be mentioned all the time, rubbing the noses of the collectors who through their own stupid fault (i.e., being born too late, living in the wrong place, being poor) don't have mint+ copies? I have several friends all over the world who I talk to regularly about comics, and you know what? We *never* mention the grades of the books we love, we talk about the stories and art and laugh at ourselves for buying daft comics but never see who has the best copy of *Fantastic Four* #1.

However it isn't all bad. I enjoy Michelle Nolan's articles and she always gets across the love of the books, I hope more articles written like this appear. The quality of the paper is excellent and for all I've said, Russ appears to be okay. But, why no replies to the letters? Are there no more new things to be said about comics so we have to cover toys, artprints and Pez dispensers (what are

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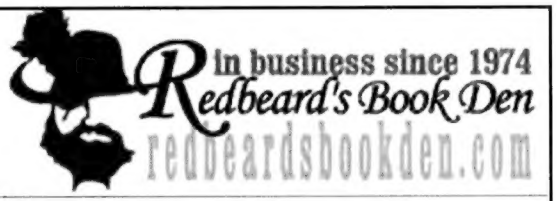

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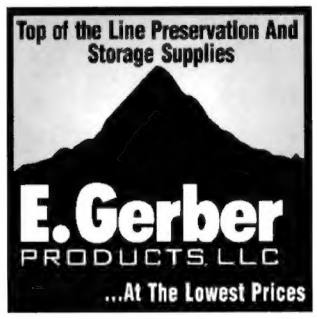

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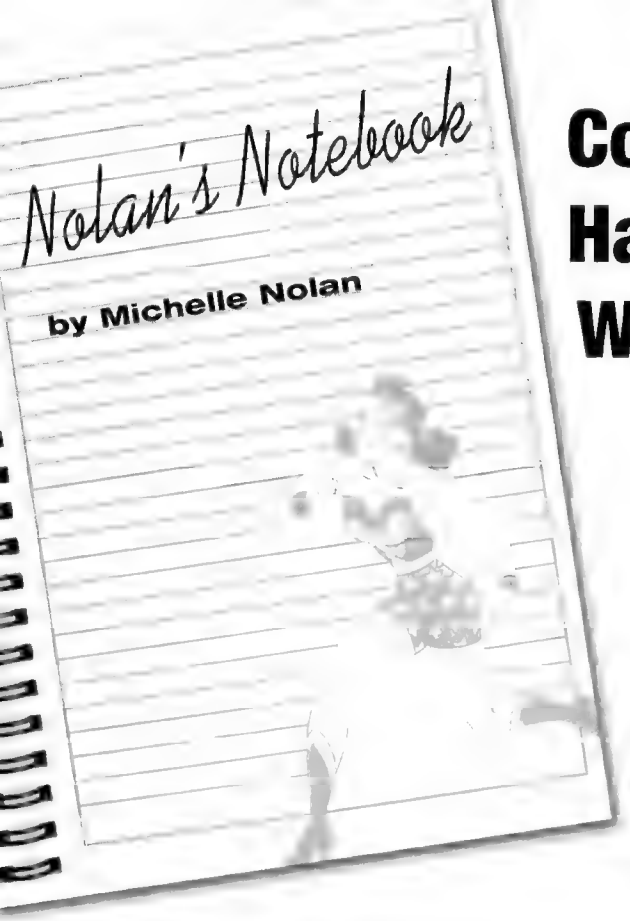


Collecting Our Thoughts: Have You Ever Really Considered Why You Collect Anything?

Considering how important that collecting comics, books and/or art is for many of us, it's surprising how seldom collectors talk about the meaning of collecting whenever we gather.

This rambling column is a little different than my usual essays on comic history, but I hope it will give you insight into all the aspects that make a collector so different from a non-collector. I'll bet everyone reading this can relate to at least some of those aspects.

I'm writing this in conjunction with the 25th anniversary celebration of APA-I, the Amateur Press Association for Indexers of comics and comic-related material. APA-I recently celebrated its 100th quarterly mailing, thanks to the good work of coordinator Ray Bottorff and all the members who have helped fill my files with intriguing and informative material.

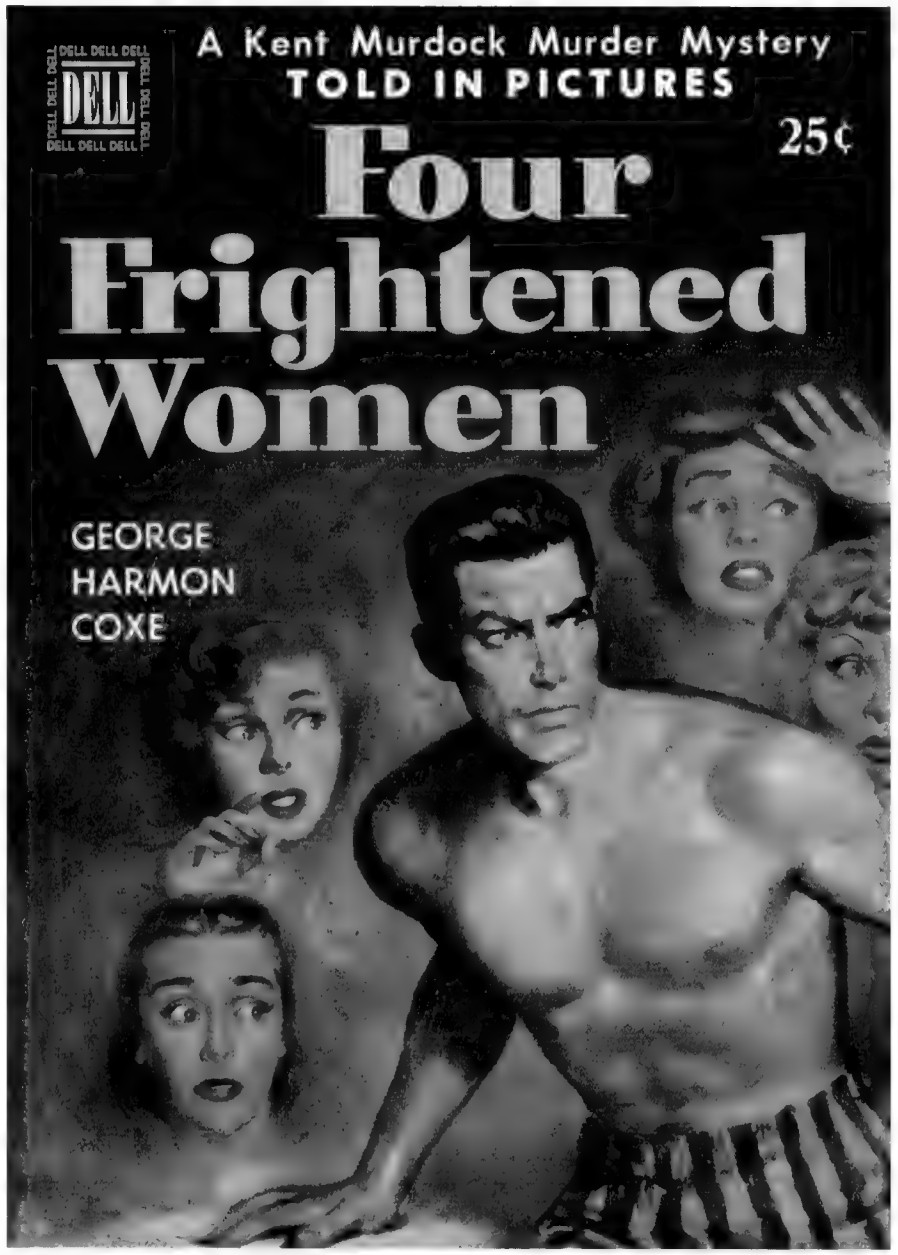
Even though membership has varied over the years, it's amazing that such an organization of dedicated indexers and "infophiles" has lasted so long. I have been a member for more than half the organization's history, and I have yet to see a mailing that has not taught me something.

When comic collecting began to bloom in the 1960s, with the first conventions and the first mail-order dealers—and mail-order prices!—collectors were noticed by the media for the first time. Of course, just about everything the mind of mankind can conceive has been collected at one time or another, and there were always collectors of all ages almost since the modern comic book was conceived during the depths of the Great Depression.

However, very few newspaper or magazine stories were devoted to the subject of comic collecting before the mid-1960s. There were plenty of critical articles about comics, of course, during the 1940s and '50s, but hardly anything about collectors, younger or older. The same could be said for almost any other aspect of popular culture.

Until the mid-1960s, "collectors" were devoted to the likes of stamps, coins, fine art, antiques, and so on, or at least that's the way the public perceived the concept. "Collecting" was serious stuff, usually with educational and/or financial overtones. In my collection of vintage magazines, I have a couple of issues of *Hobbies* from the early 1940s. These large, handsome 100-plus page magazines, replete with tiny type and thousands of advertisements and classifieds, have only two or three pages apiece devoted to old books and magazines of any type!

Until the dawn of the modern age of collecting 30 to 40 years ago, most so-called "collectibles" had to have genuine value of some sort, whether intellectual or intrinsic. Teachers were happy to hear if a student collected stamps. Teachers were tolerant of passions such as dolls. Virtually all of them, however,



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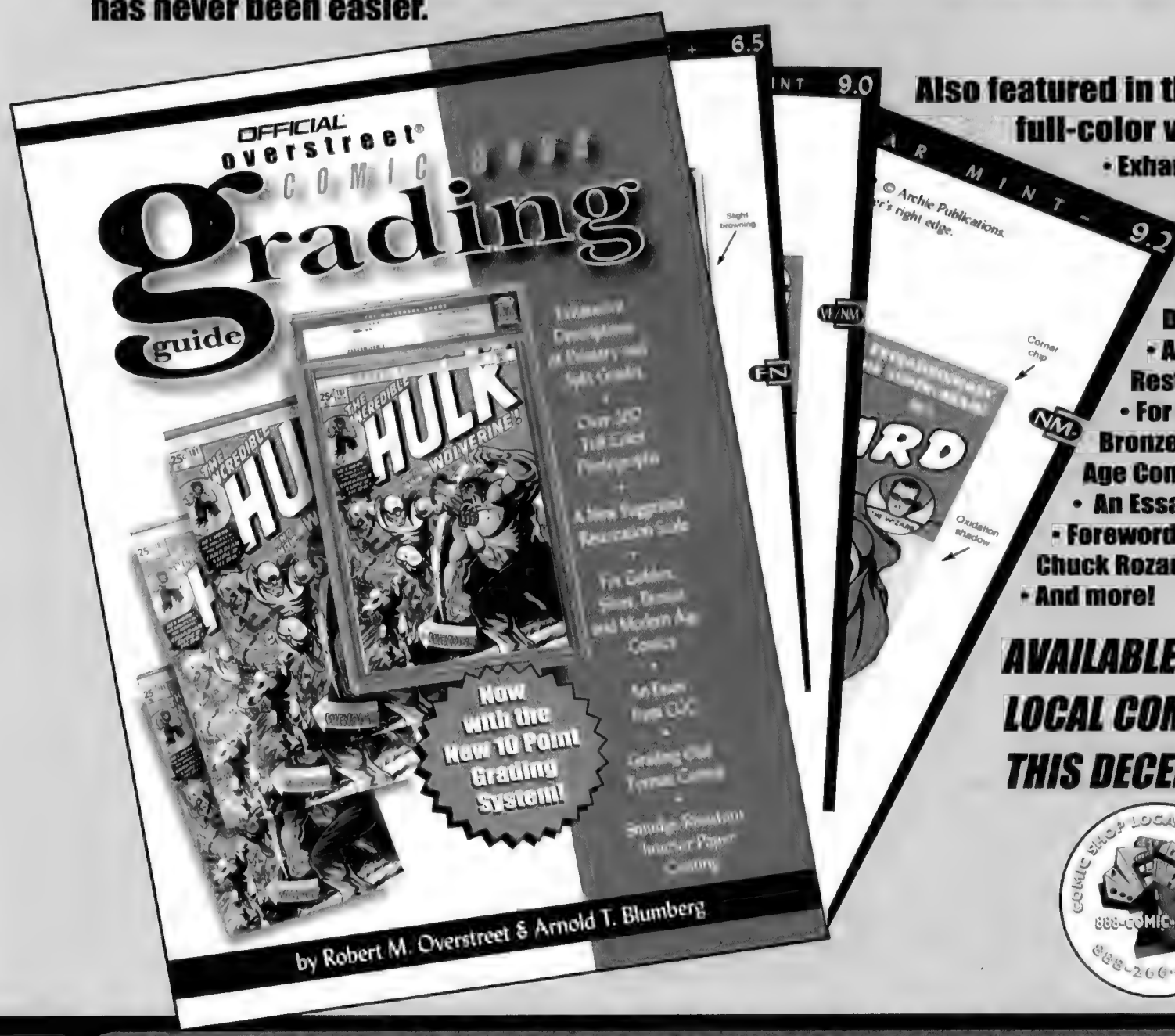

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would have been horrified at the concept of a "comic book collector" of any age! The same probably goes for most anyone.

How well I remember. I began collecting comics as an eight-year-old in the second grade, 47 years ago—one year after the Comics Code Authority symbol began to appear on comics early in 1955. By the time I had somehow earned promotion to the third grade, I had amassed a collection of well over 100 comic books—that was a lot for an eight-year-old with an allowance of one dime a week! I somewhat warily announced that fact to my teacher on the day she agreed to let me trade "two for one" from her rainy-day box of old comics.

When she asked why I was willing to let two new comics go in exchange for one old one ("old" in this case being comics dated three or four years earlier!), I proudly proclaimed, "I'm a comic book collector!" To which she replied with something like, "Don't you mean you're a comic book reader? I never heard of anyone actually collecting old comic books!"

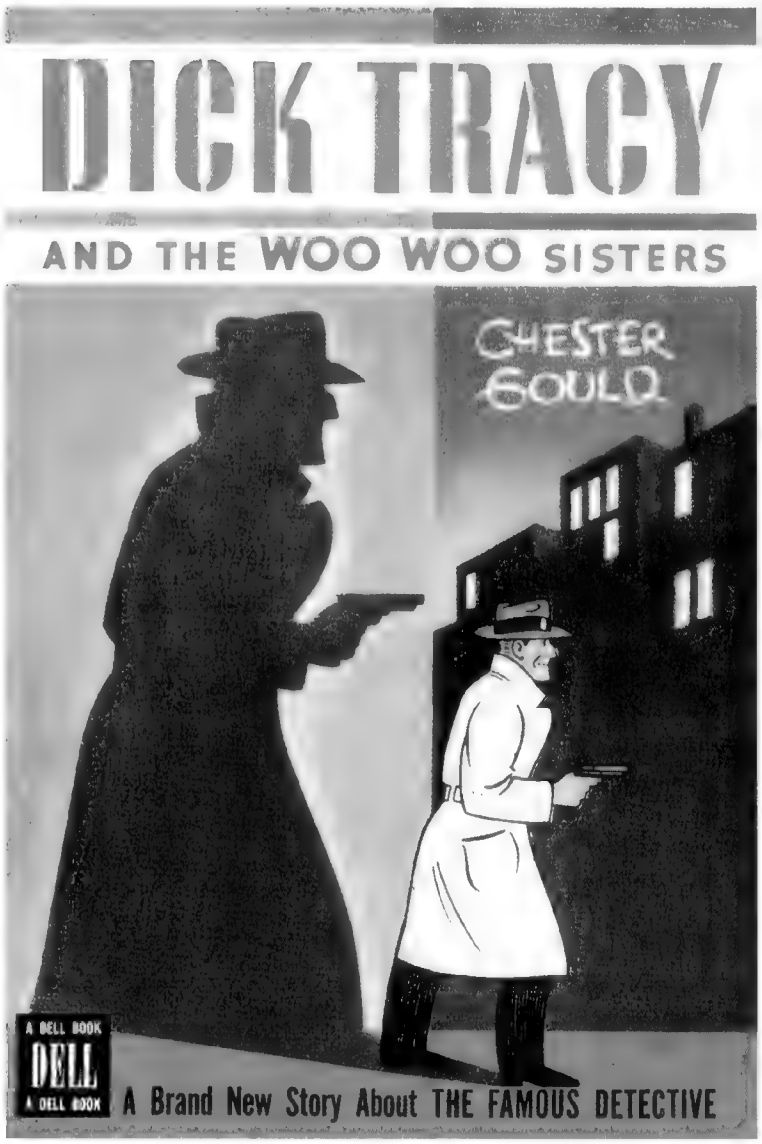
Most children of the 1950s were, indeed, at least occasional comic book readers. But collectors? Throughout elementary and into junior high school, I did not know a single friend who could have been classified as a genuine "comic collector." I soon learned not to advertise my passion for pulp paper, lest ridicule result, even from fellow 12-year-olds who liked comics. It was OK to read them; it was not OK to methodically collect them and file them alphanumerically.

The local second-hand bookstores, which sold used comics six for a quarter, for several years claimed I was the only such "collector" they knew—the rest of the kids were just readers. Later, there were hints on the early 1960s letters pages of DC Comics that other serious comic collectors existed, not just readers, but even there the emphasis was on the stories and characters, not collections. It wasn't until I was a high school student in San Jose, Calif., that I met a few fellow collectors such as Bud Plant, Jim Buser and the late John Barrett, thanks to a series of free summer classified advertisements the local newspaper called "Kids' Classified." (Can you imagine a newspaper giving away free classifieds to kids today?)

Not long after discovering that I was not the only dedicated comic collector in the world, Jules Feiffer came out with his landmark *The Great Comic Book Heroes* in 1965 and the media began to discover comic collectors with articles such as "Superfans and Batmaniacs" that same year in *Newsweek*.

The themes of such articles, exacerbated by the high camp of the 1966 *Batman* television show, were inevitably the same: Old comic books were worth big bucks! Or, old comics were a way of regaining a little bit of one's lost youth.

Both are valid aspects of collecting, but I was far more interested in a third motivation: Preservation! From the time I first breathlessly flipped through a pile of second-hand comic books in a bookstore in the summer of 1956, I somehow realized the ephemeral nature of both pop culture and pulp paper. I believe it was an intuitive feeling; nobody ever talked with me about it for many more years.



Scarce (maybe rare) unnumbered 1947 Dell novelization.

Think about it—preservation is a marvelous motivation for collecting anything. Well, almost anything! But it's not a motivation that even today occurs to very many people, no matter what their interests.

"It's an investment!" "I love the art!" "I love the characters!" "I'm anal retentive!" "It's nostalgic!" These are the rationales of so many paper collectors, in no particular order. But preservation? Preservation just doesn't come up as often, though I have met a handful of collectors who have the same feelings about preservation that I do. But the public just doesn't relate to preservation.

For example, a few months ago I lucked into a batch of about 100 vintage paperbacks for a quarter apiece at an estate sale near my home in Bellingham, Wash. Only one or two could have been considered valuable or rare, but you see fewer and fewer of these little paperbound gems today, particularly preserved in decent condition. I kept about half of them for my collection and sought to sell the rest, because they were duplicates of books I already had.

Most bookstores, though, don't really want most old paperbacks, at least not for more than about 50 cents. The vast majority of book dealers, of course, would recognize the value of a Philip K. Dick first edition (many of which came out in paperback) or the early works of Harlan Ellison, or something exotic such

as sleaze or juvenile delinquency. But, in general, old paperbacks don't fetch much, especially if they are not in fine or near-mint condition.

One bookstore clerk (not the owner, who knows better) checked my books the way she would have checked current paperbacks. The result? While I was perusing books on the shelves, she cracked the spines of most of my duplicate old paperbacks through rough handling, then proclaimed "those have cracked spines," and turned them down! She had no concept of preservation! I sadly gave them to the public library for its book sale.

By the same token, I have an older neighbor who wanted an evaluation of her late husband's book collection. He had amassed hundreds of good books, including a number of nice modern first editions from the 1950s and '60s, but he had removed the dust jackets from virtually all of them! My neighbor was astonished to learn that the dust jacket represents well over 80 or 90 percent of the value of most collectible books, especially modern first editions and other fiction along with children's books and so forth.

Again, there was no concept of preservation.

On the other hand, while some of the well-read books of my childhood would now be considered "fair to good" at best on my shelves, at no time did I ever remove a dust jacket, or even try to abuse one. Somehow I knew that was an integral, important part of a book, whether a Nancy Drew mystery or a Robert Heinlein science fiction novel.

Along with preservation, scarcity and rarity always have been my other prime motivations for collecting, along with a general love for the pop culture of the 1920s through the 1960s. It really wasn't until the 1980s and '90s that most comic book collectors had any real concrete notions of scarcity and rarity, though. Before that, those concepts generally rested at least as much on hunches as they did on any factual evidence.

Of course, in the past half-dozen years or so, the Internet has made a hash of the concept of scarcity and rarity with regard to paper goods of all sorts (and most everything else, too). If you seldom or even never see a copy listed on-line of a certain item over a year or two, you can reasonably be assured it's scarce or uncommon, if not genuinely rare. Remember, though, that many of the most desirable supposedly scarce items—such as the Black Canary issues of *Flash Comics* (#86-104 from 1947-49)—are locked away in collections and not offered for sale as often as other, less popular but perhaps even scarcer comics from the same era.

The last issue, #7 (Sep 1955)—uncommon.

The result has been that books and comics considered either scarce or high-demand have gone up in value because of the Internet, but more common items have plunged in value, some of them precipitously. This has made preservation of scarce items a bit more difficult for those of us who are financially challenged!

There's another aspect to collecting, one sometimes discussed primarily by the likes of psychologists. That's the concept of objective control. There aren't many areas of life in which we have real control of anything, but collecting often offers this opportunity.

It's an aspect of collecting with real appeal for many, including me, I must admit. How often does life turn out neatly, like a complete collection of the first 100 issues of *Archie*? It is theoretically possible, if you have the money and patience, to guarantee yourself that you'll eventually have such a treasured pile of pulp.

I've always felt that the concept of control, whether collectors will admit it or not, plays a major role for any collector. In fact, I would bet that maybe even the majority of collectors are "control freaks" of a sort. They may not hunger to dominate relationships or the workplace, but they thirst for the control that is possible in putting together a collection.

That also my be why some collectors get so intensely frustrated when one or two items elude them in an otherwise long, complete run (or maybe even not so long). They know the treasures they seek are out there somewhere; they just haven't been able to find them.

Many people collect one thing or another in a casual fashion, but I'll bet most serious collectors are a minority of the population, no matter what the category. This is particularly true when the

concept of preservation enters the picture. My guess is that the vast majority of the population isn't really concerned with the concept of the preservation of ephemeral pop culture.

Most people surely would agree over the value of preserving the original Declaration of Independence or the Mona Lisa, but an old comic, paperback or pulp? Only a tiny minority of people would really care about that. I'll bet not two people in 100—maybe not one in 100—really cares about preserving such things, whether or not they actually collect them.

Do you realize how truly special you are if you are an "old paper" preservationist? Think about it—how many people would rather have a $500 comic book, pulp magazine, modern first edition or piece of original art instead of something more modern, more commercial? Although many people are at least moderately intrigued by some aspect of the past, be it old cars or old music, I maintain that paper preservationists are rare indeed. Especially paper preservationists outside the realm of old books.

Somewhere I recall reading that ten percent of the people buy 90 percent of the books. That's modern books, not old books! That sounds about right. In fact, a recent *USA Today* article said a survey showed that only 28 percent of U.S. adults buy four or more in-print books a year. One percent of the adult population is less than two million people, but I feel sure there are not even close to two million adults who have a passion for preserving even relatively small quantities of old paper of any type, books or otherwise, except perhaps family heirlooms or a few items from their childhoods.

Imagine how truly special you are as a "preservationist!" My guess is that less than one-half of one percent of the population is the least bit interested in the noble pursuit of preserving old paper.

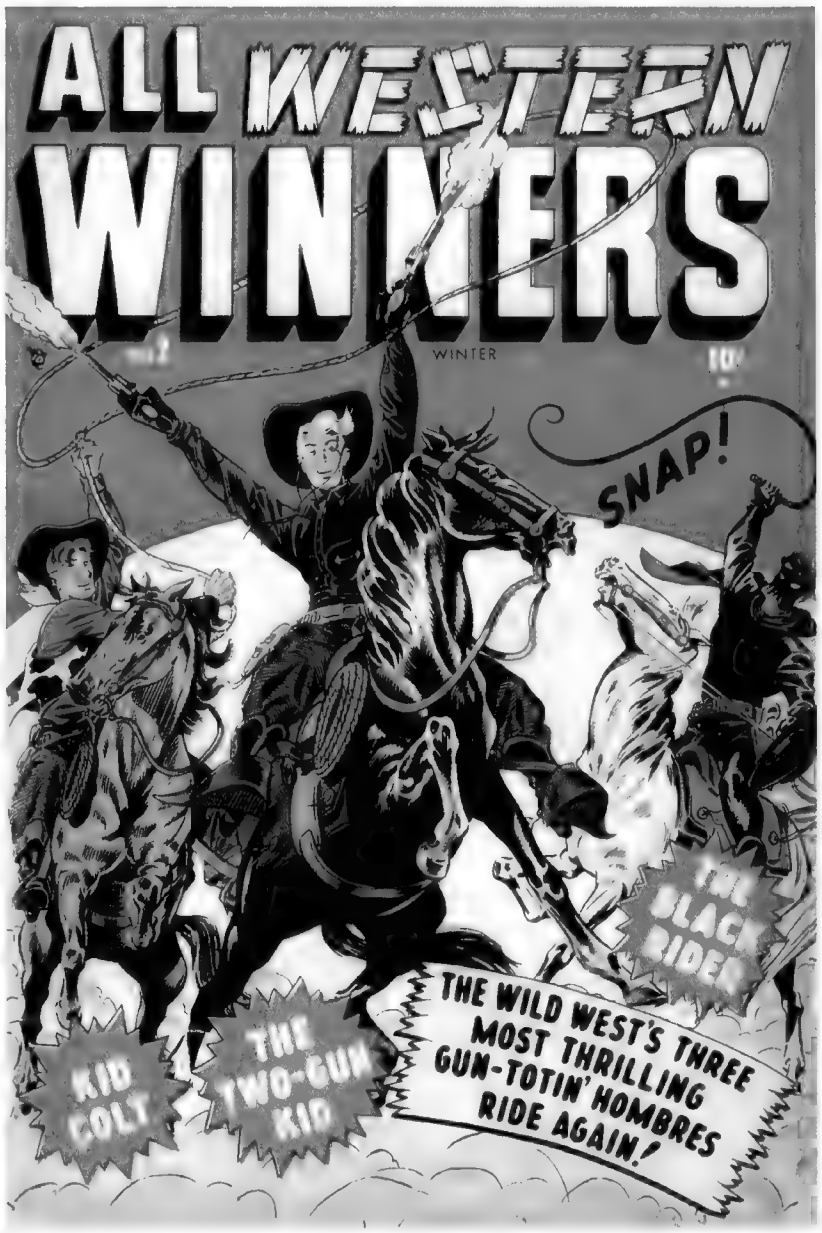
Yet it's a wonderful passion, and there is so much to choose from. Although I realize I am unlikely to have the only remaining copy of any item of old paper, every time I add such a piece to my collection, I feel the immense satisfaction of being a preservationist. In fact, I have always felt it to be more of a calling than a hobby.

The total number of comics, pulps and paperbacks—that is, supposedly disposable reading matter—published from the 1930s through the 1950s was fewer than 100,000 items, including a little fewer than 38,000 comics, 35,000 pulps and 15,000 paperbacks. Throw in items such as children's books, including series books, dime novels from an earlier era, Big Little Books and Little Golden Books, and we're still not too far over 100,000.

As for mainstream magazines of all types, even if there were 200 different issues offered during each month of the 360 months of the three-decade period of the 1930s through the 1950s, including a handful published every week, were still talking about 72,000 different magazines, or 2400 different issues per year.

That seems a bit high to me, but no matter. And, of course, there were probably more books of all types than magazines published over that period. My point is that you could find or buy one new vintage paper item to preserve every day of your adult life over a 60-year period—roughly 30 items every month for six decades!—and you still would have "only" 21,900 items! I actually know a handful of people who have more than that many vintage paper items—I'm not too far short of that mark myself for 47 years of valiant, fascinated effort as a preservationist!—and yet no collector/preservationist is even close to having everything, no matter how widely we cast our nets for paper goods.

Yet, again, I stress that we preservationists are a distinct, tiny minority. So what we do is truly important, if paper items are to be saved from the ravages of time and, more to the point, lack of interest.



The #2 (actually #1) issue (Winter 1948/49)—scarce!

In closing, I'd like to say I was truly touched by our editor Russ Cochran's kind comments in *CBM* #97, and that so many of you voted for this column as one of your favorite features. My sincere thanks! That means more than you can imagine. I am extremely grateful, so I'll try to continue to "preserve" your interest in so many of those old comics, pulps, paperbacks and books!

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ODDBALL COMICS

by Scott Shaw!

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Strange Stories From Another World

Issue: Vol. 1 No. 2, Date: August 1952, Publisher: Fawcett Publications, Inc., Cover Artist: Norman Saunders

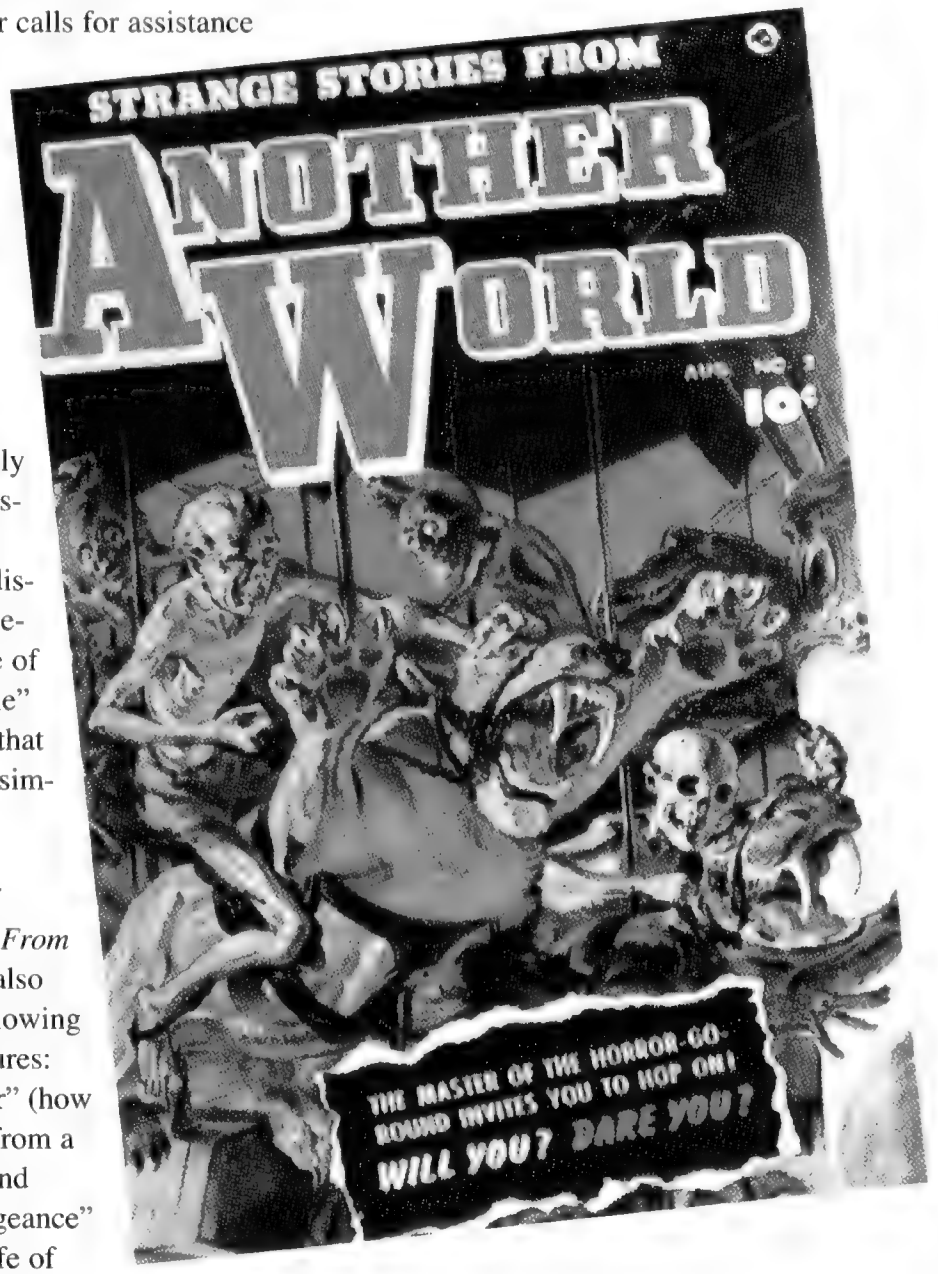
There's nothing happier than a carnival merry-go-round, right? Unless, of course, it happens to be a monster-filled (both critters and riders) "Horror-Go-Round," complete with whip-wielding zombies, a prehistoric smilodon—and what looks to be a saber-toothed frog!

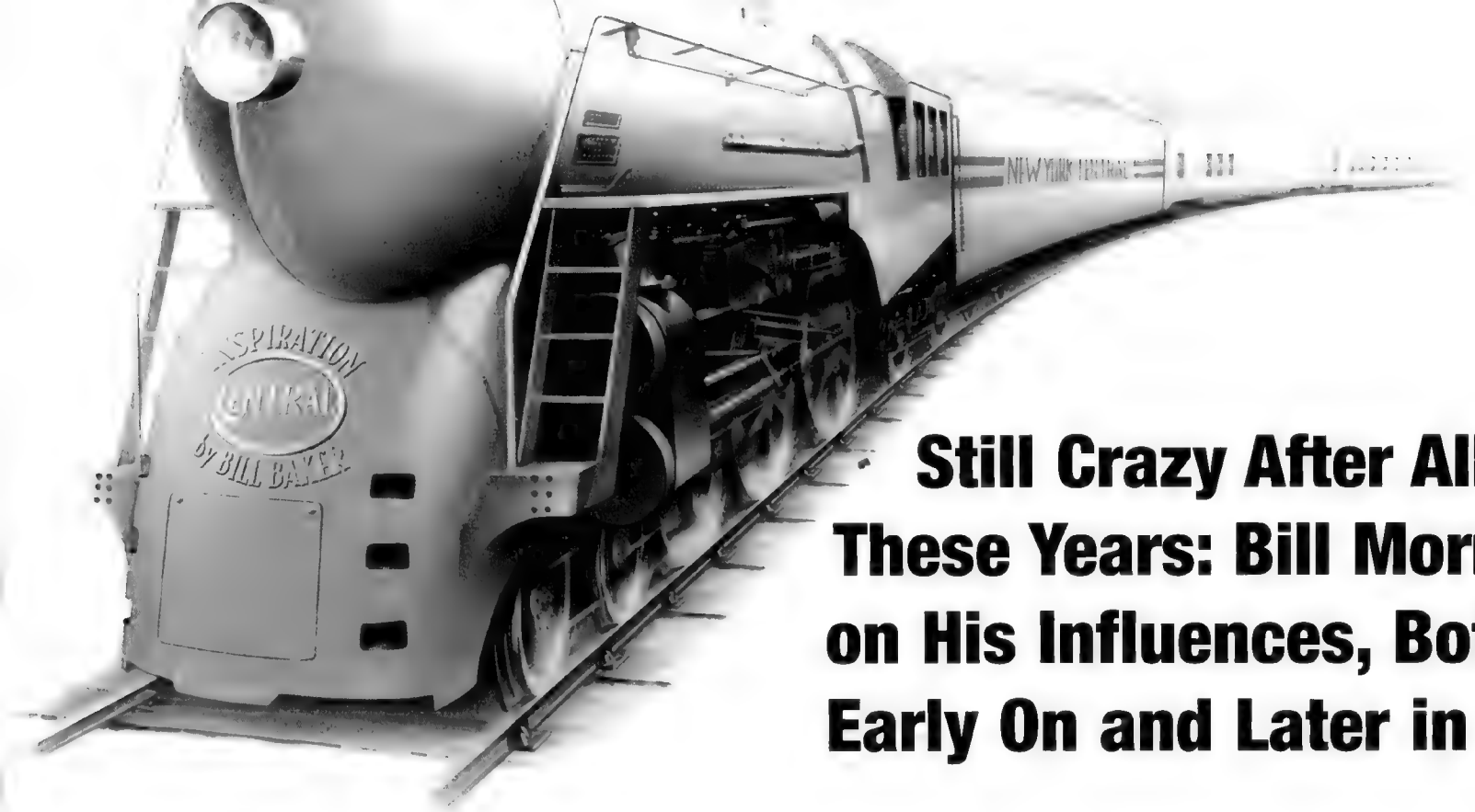
Appropriately enough, this issue's 10-page cover story is titled "Horror-Go-Round." (Unfortunately, I have no idea as to the identity of its writer or artist.) It begins as two adult brothers, Robert and Kenneth Graham, are disturbed by a strange new attraction in the park. It's a ghoulish-themed carousel, complete with gruesome carved monsters substituted for the usual wooden ponies. The local children love it, however, and the merry-go-round's elderly operator claims he would never intentionally frighten the kids. Several nights later, Robert's awakened by a phone call from Kenneth, who's convinced he's being stalked by "something peculiar." The following morning, Robert's called by the police to identify his brother's body. A witness claims to have gotten a glimpse of the killer, who resembled a human gargoyle! As the crime escalates into a series of murders, the entire city is affected.

Later, Robert makes a horrifying discovery—his brother's grave has been robbed! He tracks a trail of unearthly footprints into the park, ending at the "Horror-Go-Round"! There, he finds a new creature added to the creepy carousel, one that closely resembles a monstrous version of Kenneth! When he determines that the creature is alive, he's interrupted by the kindly old man who runs the amusement attraction. It turns out that he's a member of a species of vampire that cannot assume the guise of a human! He runs the merry-go-round as a shelter for others of his own kind. As Robert unmasks him, the "Horror-Go-Round" operator calls for assistance from his fellow "creatures of the night," who quickly close in on Robert Graham. A few days later, the "Horror-Go-Round" is shut down, supposedly due to its lackluster business. As the carousel is dismantled, a policeman notices one of its new, "horrible" monsters—one that looks strangely similar to Robert Graham!

This issue of *Strange Stories From Another World* also includes the following stories and features: "Death's Beggar" (how to gain release from a witch's curse) and "Hands Of Vengeance" (hands with a life of their own!) plus a more-than-slightly-strange back-cover house ad for Fawcett's *Terror Tales*.

ODDBALL Factoid:
Norman Saunders is also well known for his wonderful paintings for pulp magazine covers and trading cards!





Still Crazy After All These Years: Bill Morrison on His Influences, Both Early On and Later in Life

Interview by Bill Baker

For the past ten years the good folks at Bongo Comics have been putting out comic book versions of the characters featured in Matt Groening's incredibly popular TV series, The Simpsons. *And while a veritable legion of creators have contributed to the company's various ongoing titles, annuals, spin-offs and specials, one soft-spoken individual has been there alongside Groening from the start: Bill Morrison. In fact, just about everything that issues from Bongo central—be it calendars, mugs, toys, t-shirts, or any of the other million and one items that bear the characters' likenesses—has probably been personally looked at, if not designed or drawn or fully painted, by Morrison. For many, such a workload would be a real burden. But for Morrison, it's just a job.*

Nope. Just kidding. Because, for Morrison, making comics is truly a passion, and, if truth be told, a dream come true. His love for the medium, for creating the art and stories, shows in everything he does, whether it appears in The Simpsons, Radioactive Man, Futurama *or his own occasional series,* Roswell.

That same passionate response is just as evident when Morrison discusses how the roots of his love for the comics medium took hold, and how the work of various artists, both from within and outside of comics, have nurtured and encouraged his own artistic growth over the years.

Comic Book Marketplace: You read a lot of different types of comics when you were a kid, didn't you?

Bill Morrison: I think, like a lot of people growing up in the sixties, I went through different phases. There was a lot more variety back then. But I went through my super-hero phase, and my Archie phase, and maybe there was a short *Richie Rich* period.

I didn't actually discover Marvel comics until I was about 13, because there were no comic shops back then, and the bookstore where I bought my comics for some reason didn't carry Marvels, as hard as that is to believe. So when I was about 13, my sister's girlfriend had a brother who had a couple of Marvel comics, and he gave them to me. It was like, "Wow! What's this?" I was aware of the characters, because I had seen them in cartoons on TV—Thor and Iron Man, you know. I had seen those Marvel super-hero cartoons, but I had never actually read the comics. So it was really enlightening, and suddenly I was exposed to these heroes with problems and all that stuff, so it kind of got me back into comics.

But, yeah, I grew up with all kinds of comics, and I love them all, not just super-heroes.

CBM: What character was it that first really made an impression on you, and what about that particular persona struck a chord with you?

Morrison: I was just the perfect age for the *Batman* TV show when it first came on in 1966, so immediately I wanted Batman—in whatever form. Toys, comics, whatever. And my dad took me to this little bookstore that had a couple of spinner racks. The very first comic book he bought me was a *Worlds Finest*, I think it was maybe #163, or #164. It was the one with Superman and Batman with crowns on their heads, like they were kings, and they were dividing up a globe and deciding who was going to rule what half of the world. I can't remember which one, but one of them was complaining that the one with the sword was taking the biggest share of the Earth and leaving him with the smallest portion. But I always remembered that. It was like, "Wow, this is great!" Not only Batman, but here's Superman, who I'd also seen on TV. And from there I discovered Green Lantern, and the Atom and Hawkman, the Justice League, and I was a real DC addict for a number of years.

I think when I discovered girls, then I started buying Archie comics. That was probably around 1969, when *The Archies* show was on TV. And, of course, *Sabrina*, and *Josie and the Pussycats*, I read those for a while and then outgrew them. It was a little after that that I discovered the Marvel comics. I was a little bit older.

CBM: Who were some of the creators who really grabbed your attention back then?

Morrison: Well, as a kid I wasn't too aware of who did what, especially in DC comics, because they didn't always have credits back then. I wasn't the kind of fan, as a kid, that really delved into finding out who did what.

But I think when I sort of became aware, and was developing the ambition to be a comic book artist myself, the first person I really remember emulating was Neal Adams. I was crazy about his work. And then Berni Wrightson. Jim Steranko was a real favorite. For a long time, those were like the "Big Three" for me, my favorite artists. And, of course, I loved Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. Over time I started developing more of an appreciation for some of the old DC artists whose names I didn't know when I was a kid. But I would say that Steranko, Wrightson and Adams were my "first loves"...if that doesn't sound too gay. [General laughter]

CBM: Was it the sheer energy and wild sense of design in the work of those three that captured your imagination?

Morrison: Yeah. I think, especially with Adams and Steranko, a lot of it was the design. And I don't think I really was conscious of it at the time, I just knew that there was something about those pages that knocked me out. And with Wrightson, it was just the technique. I was crazy about his line, and the detail that he put into his drawings. I think at the time I discovered Wrightson, I was really turned on by horror comics and he was just top of the heap. So everything he did was great.

And then, of course, there was Dan DeCarlo. When I was reading the Archie comics, his stuff really leapt out at me. He was really a cut above all the other guys doing humor comics, in my mind. He was a great storyteller. A wonderful artist. He just had a nice clean, beautiful line. Very attractive characters, and really funny. I think he took scripts that were *good*, but *really* turned up the volume on them with the way he drew the characters. I think of a shot of Archie reacting to a pretty girl, and he would draw this wildly exaggerated take, or he'd be leaping up in the air. He just took it way beyond what was probably in the written script.

CBM: What about the Marvel comics, and the folks working for them, impressed you?

Morrison: Well, obviously Steranko was doing a lot of work for Marvel during that period, so I think he was probably my favorite. Jack Kirby. John Buscema. I bought that book *How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way* back then. That came out in the mid-seventies sometime, right around the time that I decided that I wanted to be a comic book artist, so that influenced me a lot. I was trying to learn how to draw that way, and that book pretty much told me what I needed to know to be a Marvel artist, so I lived by that, and studied it like crazy.

There were guys like Mike Ploog, because he was sort of a Wrightsonesque sort of artist, so I loved his work. And John Romita. How could I forget John Romita? Man...

Yeah, I was really crazy about John Romita back then, but even more so now. I think after a while, maybe it was the Neal Adams influence, when I started getting a little bit older, and a little bit more serious about becoming a comic book artist, John Romita's stuff started looking a little more pedestrian to me. Because it was just very clean and simple. And then you look at somebody like Neal Adams, or Bernie Wrightson, and there's just so much detail and line work and realism, that I think after a while I sort of put Romita aside. I still liked his work, but I wasn't as crazy about it as I had been. But now I look back at Romita's stuff and I realize how brilliant it is, and I love it.

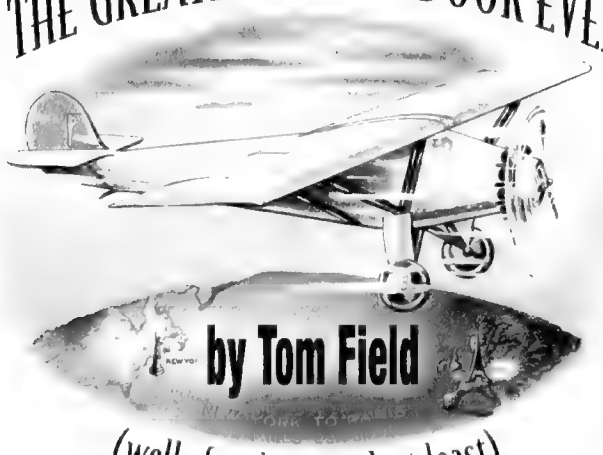
Nothing against Neal Adams, but looking back now, if somebody said, "You can have an original Neal Adams page, or you can have an original John Romita page," I would take the original John Romita—because I could learn so much from it. He's a great storyteller. Great at composition. And his lines are just beautiful and clean, and really attractive.

CBM: Are there any other folks who might have had a hand in your development, directly or not?

Morrison: Well, I know this is directed towards comics, but a lot of my influences I think came from other areas. I was really influenced by Salvador Dali, Norman Rockwell, Alphonse Mucha. A lot of animation cartoonists, like Fred

[continued on page 76]

THE GREATEST COMIC BOOK EVER



by Tom Field

(well...for this month at least)

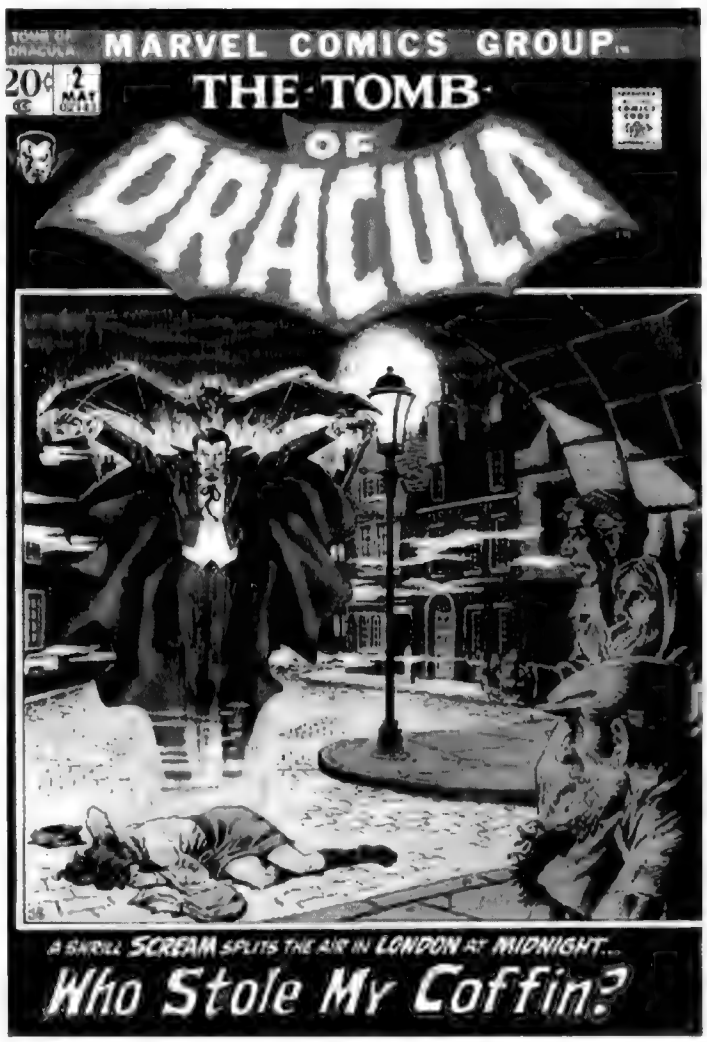
It was the First Worst Night of My Life

I was eight-going-on-nine in mid-1972, and Marvel comics, Aurora models and *Star Trek* reruns were typically my biggest concerns. But on this one night I was genuinely scared for my mother's life.

To this day, I don't know what ailed her. My tight-lipped family has always kept important matters on a need-to-know basis, and apparently Mom's illness was such that she'd decided I either couldn't or shouldn't understand it. All I knew was that she was hospitalized and facing surgery; that my 12-year-old sister and I were in the care of our dad and grandparents; and that when my deeply religious grandmother prayed aloud for Mom's recovery, I bolted from the dinner table and ran crying into the bathroom. Because that's when I finally deduced from everybody's silence: Mom's life was in danger.

And yet, taking a cue from my poker-faced family, I betrayed none of my fears when Dad brought us to see Mom at the hospital on this eve before her surgery. I don't recall how long we stayed, what was said—or unsaid—or even exactly how I felt when I left Mom that night, knowing I might not see her again.

But I do remember Dad's side-trip to LaVerdiere's Super Drugs. To other residents of Augusta, Maine, LaVerdiere's was just the place for prescriptions, cold medicine or sunscreen. But to me it was the source of all comics—the only store in town to keep its racks current with the latest and greatest Marvels, DCs, Gold Keys, Archies, Harveys and Charltons. I'd been raised on comics—Marvels, primarily—and virtually all of them had come from the "Hey, Kids! Comics!" spinner at LaVerdiere's. For as far back as I could remember, comics were a part of my landscape. They were slipped into Christmas stockings, saved up for long roadtrips, and every Friday after buying groceries at the First National supermarket next door, Mom would stop into LaVerdiere's and select my weekly comic. She I knew I liked *Fantastic Four* best, but on the off-weeks, *Hulk*, *Spider-Man*, or *Sub-Mariner* would do just fine.



Dad, however, still dismissed comics as "funnybooks," and to him they were all alike. He was recruited to buy comics only in a pinch—like, if we kids were sick, and he had to pick up our prescriptions and a little get-well reading at LaVerdiere's—and then you had to give him a pretty explicit list or risk getting *Hot Stuff* or *Jughead*.

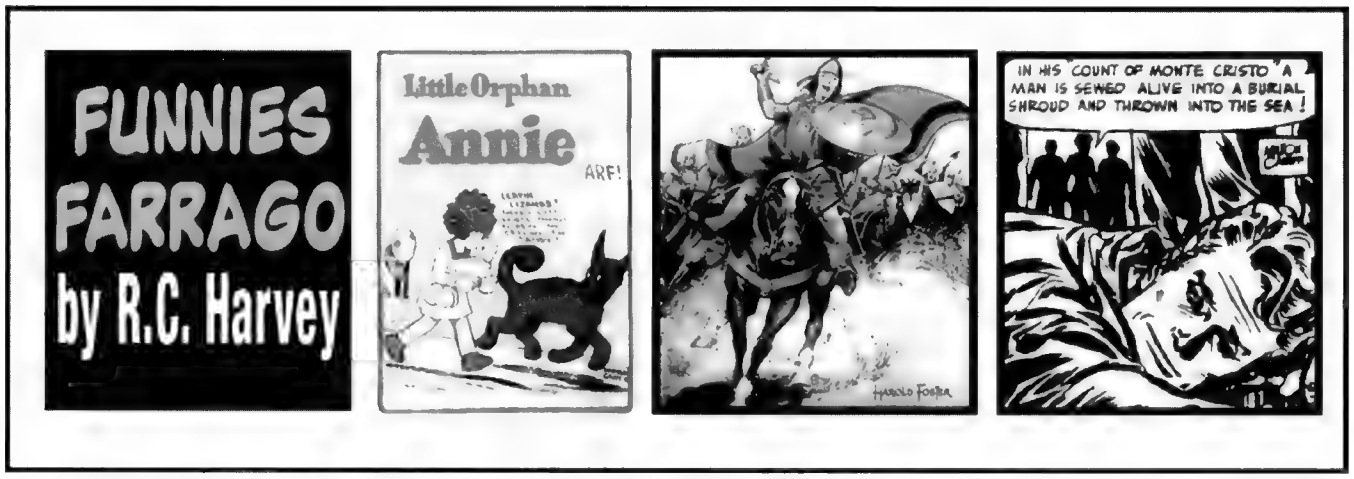
So, on this unusual night, it was doubly unusual that Dad stopped at LaVerdiere's and offered to buy me a comic. And I must have been rattled, because I didn't follow my usual instincts. I passed on *Hulk* #151, *Sub-Mariner* #49, *Hero for Hire* #1—even *Amazing Adventures* #12 with that great Gil Kane Beast/Iron Man cover. Instead, I opted for *Tomb of Dracula* #2.

Why this comic book? Good question. Yes, I was a huge monster fan, but Dracula was hardly my favorite. And I hadn't even bought the first issue of this new title (although I did read a friend's), so it's not like I was trying to collect it. It meant nothing to me that Gerry Conway, Gene Colan and Vince Colletta wrote, penciled and inked the book.

But for some subconscious reason, I selected this comic on that night, brought it home—and it saved me.

Again, this defies explanation, but *Tomb of Dracula* #2 (Marvel Comics, May 1972)—a Hammer-like vampire story called "The Fear Within," all about Dracula's descendant, Frank Drake, stealing the vampire lord's coffin—just transported me from my troubles. There was nothing inherently uplifting about this story. As scripted by Conway and rendered by Colan and Colletta, Dracula was a thorough villain who in the course of this adventure drained three victims—one of them being Frank Drake's fiancée—and he left a fourth, Frank's friend Clifton, a blubbering madman. But despite the victims

[continued on page 76]


FUNNIES
FARRAGO
by R.C. Harvey
Little Orphan
Annie
ARF!
IN HIS "COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO" A MAN IS SEWED ALIVE INTO A BURIAL SHROUD AND THROWN INTO THE SEA!

The Economics of Comics

Al Capp, who drew Li'l Abner as a newspaper comic strip character for most of his adult life, had a wooden leg and a speech impediment. When he talked, he punctuated his utterances with hiccoughed hoots of laughter that heralded the approach of a punch line long before anyone else could see it coming. In discussing his choice of careers, he used to say, amid irregularly emitted but almost suppressed guffaws, that he decided to become a comic strip cartoonist at the age of 11 when he learned that Bud Fisher was paid $5,000 a week for drawing Mutt and Jeff as newspaper comic strip characters and was constantly marrying French countesses.

"I decided," Capp would hoot, "that was for me. After all, how much—hoot!—does a bottle of ink cost?" Another hoot.

This autobiographical fragment is, like many promulgated by Capp, somewhat awry. Fisher didn't marry the Countess Aedita de Beaumont, whom he met on a trans-Atlantic boat ride while returning from France, until 1924 when Capp was 13 not 11. And by 1924, Fisher was making considerably more than $5,000 a week.

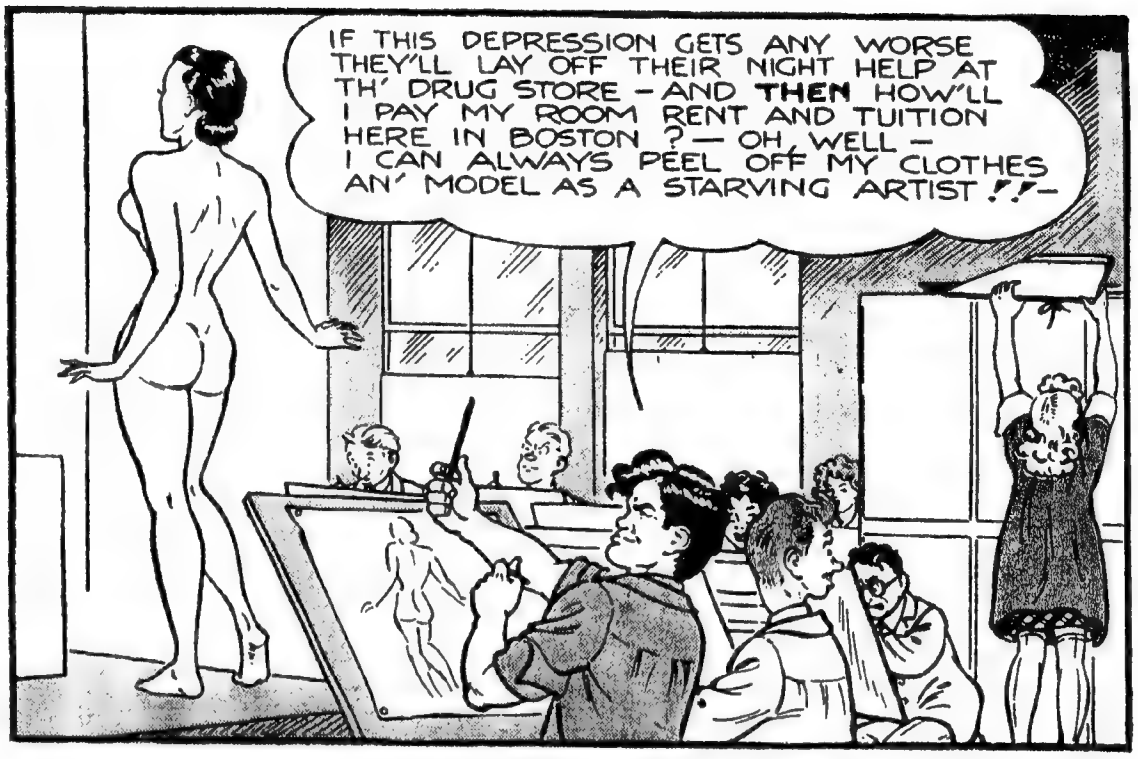
But Capp was, as he said, 11 when he decided upon a career as an artist. That year, his family moved from New Haven, Connecticut, where Capp had lost his left leg by falling under a moving streetcar trolley, to Brooklyn, where he was enrolled in P.S. 62, which, Capp alleged, was located "in the Brownsville (or Murder, Inc.) section" of the storied New York borough. Because he was not possessed of two sound lower extremities, young Alfred (as his family called him) could not win the respect of his classmates in the ordinary, or Brownsville, way—which, Capp claimed, consisted chiefly of "attacking classmates from behind and running off with their possessions before they could scramble up."

He won respect, instead, by drawing. He was good at drawing, good enough that his scalawag peers would pay him a nickel or a dime each to make drawings of them depicted as the professionals they aspired to be—namely, cowboys, pirates, bookies, or neighborhood assassins. Admiration for his talent and his pay skyrocketed when Miss Mandelbaum entered the curriculum of P.S. 62.

"Miss Mandelbaum taught drawing," Capp recalled, "and was the first female teacher (in fact, the first female of any

Al Capp as he appeared in a **New Yorker** profile, November 29, 1947.

Capp drew an autobiographical comic booklet during World War II, its object being to demonstrate to G.I. amputees that there is life after amputation. The model here is probably not Miss Mandelbaum. Although it could be.


IF THIS DEPRESSION GETS ANY WORSE THEY'LL LAY OFF THEIR NIGHT HELP AT TH' DRUG STORE – AND **THEN** HOW'LL I PAY MY ROOM RENT AND TUITION HERE IN BOSTON ? — OH, WELL — I CAN ALWAYS PEEL OFF MY CLOTHES AN' MODEL AS A STARVING ARTIST !?!–

kind) to enter our classroom. It quickly became apparent to Miss Mandelbaum that I was the Talent, and she showed a great interest in my work, coming in every day, bending over my desk to watch me draw and (nothing is more distracting or destructive to the artist) coaching me as I went along. My classmates showed a great interest in Miss Mandelbaum's coaching, mainly because of what happened to her neckline when she bent over to coach me."

Capp, realizing an opportunity when one pounded on his desktop, quickly accepted commissions from his classmates, who paid him the princely sum of a quarter each for pictures of Miss Mandelbaum in a one-piece swimming suit and, later—as matters progressed—in nothing at all.

Some years thereafter, Capp heard about Fisher marrying countesses and determined that a career as a newspaper comic strip cartoonist was probably the most remunerative of the artistic avenues open to him.

He had little choice if he was in it for the money. There were no comic books at the time luring him into their four-color embrace, but even if there had been, the money in cartooning was, then, in syndicated newspaper comic strips. Then and for much of the rest of the century. Comic book artists, until quite recently, made almost nothing, comparatively speaking. And that brings us to one of the great ironies that has plagued the art form from its very beginnings and through much of its history until quite recently.

As I said in a book of mine (*The Art of the Comic Book*, still available at my friendly website), the art of the comics is practiced regularly in but two formats: newspaper strips and comic books. Of the two, the comic book format easily has the greater artistic potential. Comic strips operate within a severely cramped realm that not only limits panel size and number, but restricts the unfurling of narrative developments in those strips that tell stories from day to day. While the daily installment format inherently builds the suspense necessary to any story, it also requires a certain amount of repetition each day in order to recapitulate the events of preceding days. Only on Sundays can the newspaper strip approach running the full gamut of its capacities.

But in the comic book with its equivalent of a couple dozen Sunday pages all between a single set of covers, the medium has its best chance to realize a greater range of possibilities. Comic books can tell their stories all at once with no repetition (and therefore with greater dramatic impact), can exploit varying panel sizes and shapes to embellish stories with special narrative-enhancing visual effects, can manipulate time over longer periods to create mood, and can do it all in color. Despite this advantage, the economics of the field mitigated against comic books' achieving much of their potential until the 1980s.

For one thing, the market for comic books was historically

Capp's self-portrait with his creation.

Left, Capp's more-or-less standard self-portrait.
Right, Capp's somewhat unconventional self-portrait.

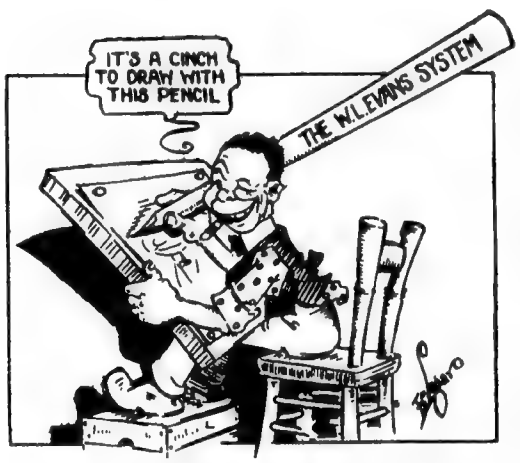
Whatever the economics of comics, there has never been a shortage of youth eager to learn the craft, nor has there been any shortage of cartoonists equally eager to teach the craft by mail order or instruction booklet, for a fee. The promotions and the materials themselves were decorated with pictures of anonymous cartoonists cheerfully cartooning at their drawing boards. This one is from **Learn to Draw Comics** by George "Jingle Jangle" Carlson, a 1933 tome recently reprinted by the enterprising folks at Dover Publications, who priced it modestly at $5.95.

the young reader. Not at first. At first, comic books were manufactured for the whole family, including, since they were in the majority and had the money, adult parents. The first comic books were reprints of newspaper comic strips, which were directed at the whole family. (On Sundays, strip cartoonists were advised to veer off in the direction of youthful readers more than on weekdays. The young were more inclined to read the comics on Sundays. On Sundays, the comics were printed all together in a single section, and kids could spread the funnies on the floor and read them avidly. On weekdays, the comic strips were scattered, in those days, throughout the paper, one on this page, another on that, and the size of the newspaper made it unwieldy for youngsters to hold in order to search for this smattering of strips, page by page, so most kids didn't bother. They waited for Sundays.)

When Superman came along, the family-orientation of comic books soon evaporated. *Superman* had been regularly rejected when Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster submitted it as a newspaper comic strip. Ditto when they re-tooled it for comic book publication. The reason for its rejection was, usually, that it was unbelievable. For whom? Not for kids.

Kids believed in all manner of fanciful things—from elves and fairies to magic tornadoes that transported children to far-off kingdoms, from talking animals to talking automobiles. They could believe anything, surely anything as ordinary as a being from another planet who could leap tall buildings at a single bound. Their fathers and mothers, however, were not likely to be as credulous. For them, Superman was unbelievable, and since comic books aimed for family consumption (which means adult purchasers), Superman was beyond the pale.

For a while.



DON'T TEAR UP YOUR
CARTOONS!!
SEGAR, cartoonist on the CHICAGO HERALD, has made arrangements to criticise—students' cartoons—four for one dollar (cash or money order)—make original drawings when necessary, etc.
Let him see your work—send some of your cartoons in NOW and get a professional cartoonist's criticism.
Money refunded if not satisfied.
E. C. SEGAR, 163 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.
HEY !!

Two of Popeye's E.C. Segar's ads for a cartooning course.

THIMBLE THEATRE
WELL, I'VE GONE AND DONE IT. I'VE HIRED A COMIC ARTIST. MY GOSH BUT IT TAKES MONEY TO RUN A NEWSPAPER $500. A WEEK FOR LITTLE FUNNY PICTURES! WOW!
HELLO MR. SNICKLES. HOW'S THE COMIC ARTIST THIS FINE DAY?
HAW! HAW! GOOD JOKE ON YOU BOSS. YEOW! PLOP!
YEAH? WHAT'S THE JOKE?
HOO-HOO! BAM!
I'VE BEEN ASLEEP ALL MORNING - HAW! HAW! HAVEN'T DONE A LICK OF WORK!
POW!
MAY-BE I HAVEN'T ANY SENSE OF HUMOR
YAH! YAH! HAW! HAW! YAH! HAW!
YOO BOY YEOW

E.C. Segar spoofed his own profession several times with Popeye—here, when Olive Oyl's diminutive brother Castor hires a cartoonist for the paper he runs.

Eventually, a couple of teenage editors in the infant industry persuaded their elders to publish Superman, and when newsstand sales figures began to arrive at the home office, Superman's publisher realized he had a winner on his hands. He also discovered that the buyers of this product were mostly youngsters.

We can easily imagine a light-bulb turning on over Harry Donenfeld's head: "Ah, ha!" he would say, his brow illuminated by the light-bulb's radiance, "so it's kids who buy comic books, not their fathers. Well, we can do something about that."

The "something" was to begin tailoring comic books not, as previously, for the pulp magazine reading public, not for adults, but for juveniles. Donenfeld did exactly that, and so did all the copycat publishers who fol-

lowed eagerly in his footsteps, printing comic books by the bale about super-powered characters in tight-fitting costumes, leaping tall buildings hither and yon.

By the time the comic book industry began publishing whole comic books of stories concocted expressly for comic books instead of reprinting newspaper comic strips, the transition from adult to juvenile literature was well underway. By the end of the 1930s, the transformation was virtually complete. Henceforth, comic books were for kids.

And kids, in our society (like it or not), are to be sheltered from a vast range of ideas and subjects. The consequent effort to produce comic book stories suitable for young readers resulted too often in producing simple-minded stories in the misguided belief that youth is equivalent to immaturity (as it is) and immaturity to mindlessness (which it isn't).

This wasn't universally true of the comic book industry, but it was true enough for long enough in this country to inhibit the medium's growth to full potential. Oddly, in the 1980s, a compensatory effort to make comic books more appealing to older readers erred in another direction by supposing that "mature themes" would enable comics to grow up. Although that's probably valid to some extent, the notion too frequently took flight by mistakenly equating "social issues" or "personality portrayal" with "mature themes."

There's more to mature storytelling than that: there is also the way a social issue is treated and how the story is told.

While comic books have been addressed to the young for most of their history, newspaper strips have unabashedly aimed at adult readers as part of the circulation building mechanism of a newspaper: they seek shamelessly to make habitual newspaper buyers out of the adult population, adults usually having more money to spend on the things advertisers blandish on newspaper pages not otherwise devoted to comics.

In order to attract and hold such readers, comic strips have traditionally been more realistic in story, more cerebral (but not necessarily intellectual) than action-oriented—even, in remarkable degree, more mature—than comic books.

But an even more insidious economic circumstance inveighed against comic books' developing to their inherent capacities as a visual-verbal narrative art through the first fifty years of their history. Until the late 1980s, a successful comic book artist could not expect to make as good a living as a successful

MOST EVER'BODY LIKES COMICS. THEY'LL BOOST OUR CIRCLEATION
I HEAR THAT CARTOONISTS MAKE BIG MONEY. COULD YOU PAY HIM?
YA THINK THEY MAKES MOREN $15 A WEEK?
SURE THEY DO
WELL, THEY DON'T EARN NO MORE — ALL THEY DO IS DRAWER FUNNY JOKE PITCHERS. A' COURSE, IF IT TOOK BRAINWORK I'D BE WILLIN' TO PAY MORE
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! INTRODUCING THE WORLD-FAMOUS CARTOONIST— B. LOONY BULLONY
ENROUTE TO PUDDLEBURG
HE HAS DRAWN MANY SUCCESSFUL STRIPS— YOU, OF COURSE, REMEMBER "OOP. THE DOOP" "BOOP, THE STUPE" "GOOP, THE PLOOP" AND LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, THAT HILARIOUS CREATION "GOOK, THE SPOOK"
Great Britain rights reserved © 1934, King Features Syndicate, Inc.
BAM!! SOCKO! WISHT I HAD A IDEAR! UMP!! PLOP! POW! ZOWIE!
'SMATTER WITCHA?
THEY AIN'T NO MORE IDEAS - LIFE AIN'T WORTH LIVIN' - THEY AIN'T NOTHIN' FUNNY
TOMBSTONES - GRAVEYARDS - CRUTCHES - HOSPITAL SUPPLIES
SNIFF
I WISH I WAS A PAPER-HANGER
1-10
EGAR
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Popeye ran a newspaper once and dutifully hired a cartoonist with the usual, for E.C. Segar, dubious results.

comic strip cartoonist, many of whom made small fortunes at their craft.

The income of a strip cartoonist, whose work is syndicated for distribution to hundreds of newspaper clients, grows as the number of papers subscribing to his feature increases. The book cartoonist was paid a page rate that seemed to have little relationship to the number of comic books sold with his work on their pages. An accident of comic book history, the page-rate formula was established in the very beginning, ironically (and unwittingly), by the newspaper syndicates.

Syndicates charged the publishers of the first comic books $5-7 a page for reprint rights to their comic strips. And when publishers started demanding original material for comic books instead of reprinting newspaper strips, that new material had to be produced at a rate competitive with the reprint fees. Comic art shops were invented to do just that. With their teams of writers, pencilers, and inkers, these shops cranked out material with the assembly-line efficiency of a factory, each specialist contributing to the final product those aspects of it that he did best—and quickest. By streamlining the process, they could produce enough pages a week to make the paltry page rate pay living wages for all concerned.

Shop practices thus established the per-page rate as the unit of pay for comic book artists and writers. The per-page rate was often higher than the per-newspaper rate in newspaper syndication, but the book cartoonist could hope to increase his income only by increasing the number of pages he did (and there are practical physical limits here) while the strip cartoonist's income went up quite independently of the quantity of his output. Still does.

On the basis of these economic facts alone—without considering, in other words, such things as the personal preferences of cartoonists for one comics format over the other—we would expect to find more cartoonists doing strips as a life's work than doing books. In fact, of course—with a few notable exceptions—that is precisely the situation. It's no wonder that Siegel and Shuster first sought syndication for their work: they, like Al Capp, knew a syndicated comic strip could bring them both fortunes.

Given the modest income that comic book cartooning has traditionally afforded, we cannot be surprised to discover that the comic book industry has traditionally been more of a young cartoonist's field than the comic strip industry. Many cartoonists plying their pens in comic books were doing their first commercial work, comic books being historically the proving ground for virtual beginners. The more skilled these artists became, the more qualified they were for more lucrative positions in the wider field of commercial

HI, THERE... I'M JOE KUBERT AND THIS IS MY PARTNER NORMAN MAURER! BECAUSE OF THE MANY LETTERS WE'VE RECEIVED REQUESTING CRITICISM AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE COMIC ART PROFESSION, WE'VE COMPILED THIS ILLUSTRATED COURSE!
WE'VE TRIED TO PUT TOGETHER IN THIS AND THE FOLLOWING LESSONS ALL THAT WE'VE LEARNED DURING OUR MANY YEARS IN THIS FASCINATING BUSINESS!
AND THE PHASE OF THIS PROFESSION THAT MOST INTERESTS US IS THE ART OF CARTOONING, WHICH IS THE VERY LIFE-BLOOD OF THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY... I HANDLE THE COMIC STYLE, COMIC STRIP! AND THAT'S THE PHASE I'M GOING TO TEACH TO YOU!
THREE STOOGES
MISS PEPPER
MY SPECIALTY IS THE STRAIGHT OR ADVENTURE STRIP! BETWEEN US, NORM AND I WILL TEACH YOU EVERY PHASE OF COMIC AND REALISTIC CARTOONING! A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF BOTH WILL HELP INSURE A SUCCESSFUL CAREER FOR YOU!
PREHISTORIC LIFE
1,000,000 YEAR
WE INTEND TO GO INTO EVERY ASPECT OF PRODUCING COMIC BOOKS FROM THE POINT WHERE THE ARTIST PENCILS HIS FIRST LINE, TO THE FINISHED COMIC BOOK ON YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND!
IN FORTHCOMING LESSONS WE'LL GO INTO DETAIL AND PASS ON TO YOU THE MANY TRICKS OF THE TRADE WE'VE LEARNED! AND WE'LL TEACH YOU TO SKILLFULLY USE THE HUNDREDS OF VARIED MATERIALS AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU MAKE A GOOD COMIC STRIP!
IN THE YEARS THAT JOE AND I HAVE BEEN PRODUCING COMIC BOOKS, WE'VE LEARNED QUITE A FEW OF THE DO'S AND DONT'S OF CARTOONING... AND THEY'RE ALL YOURS IN THIS GROUP OF SPECIALLY PREPARED LESSONS!
WE BELIEVE THAT WITH THE PROPER DESIRE ANYONE CAN LEARN TO BE A GOOD ARTIST AND EARN TOP MONEY!
BUT LIKE ANY OTHER SKILL, YOU HAVE TO CRAWL BEFORE YOU CAN WALK! SO ABOVE ALL, DON'T LET ANYTHING DISCOURAGE YOU FROM YOUR GOAL!
WORK DILIGENTLY AND REMEMBER, THE KEY WORD IS PRACTICE! DRAW, SKETCH, AND DRAW SOME MORE! IF YOUR DESIRE IS STRONG ENOUGH YOU'LL MAKE IT..... GOOD LUCK!
WHAM
THREE STOOGES

In the 1950s, comic book veterans Joe Kubert and Norman Maurer ran a correspondence cartoon course the instructional booklets of which were illustrated by the pair.

art. And as they became qualified—often after relatively short stints—many comic book artists left comics to move into advertising art or other, richer, related fields. (And much the same can doubtless be said for those who write comic books, many of whom left—or hope to leave—for careers in motion pictures or television.)

The consequences of this circumstance for the state of the art of the comics were not cheering. Comic strips were likely to be drawn by seasoned and experienced cartoonists—who, in this, the most constricted format of the art, could not exploit very much their experience. Comic books, whose greater flexibility in format would permit fuller development of the art, were likely to be drawn by cartoonists still in apprenticeship whose penchant for experimentation was comparatively untempered (and unguided) by experience.

The economics of the comic book industry were such that the four-color format was assured of a reasonably steady influx of new, young talent. Youthful enthusiasm is usually accompanied by the kind of inventiveness unfettered by tradition that is good for the art. That's a plus. But this advantage is offset considerably by the likelihood that many young and inventive cartoonists would leave the field just as they began to master its nuances. And when they did, they undermined the art form's potential by depriving the medium of the possible benefits to be derived from the skill of experienced cartoonists, cartoonists who have mastered the rudiments and discovered which new techniques work and which don't. Experience isn't everything. But it is something—something that, compared to the comic strip field, the comic book field was often woefully lacking.

I don't mean by any of this to belittle the considerable accomplishments in comic book art of cartoonists who happen to be relatively inexperienced. Nor would I opt for making it any more difficult than it already is for young talent to enter the field. Such a course would surely have robbed the art of such innovations as those injected by Neal Adams, Barry Windsor-Smith, Jim Steranko, and the like.

Nor am I forgetting the achievements of cartoonists like Jack Kirby and Gil Kane and Joe Kubert and Carl Barks and others who have steadily worked a lifetime in the field: by such exceptions, the rule is proven.

But we are contemplating the potential of the unique visual-verbal art of the comics. And since the greatest potential—because the greatest flexibility—lies in the comic book format, it is worth pausing for an instant to reflect on what the state of the art would be if Adams and Steranko and others like them were still drawing comic books. Or if Will Eisner had done it full-time as a living all his life instead of part-time as a hobby in his senior years.

Where would they have taken the art form next? What would they do for an encore?

The field has attracted more Adamses and Sterankos. And that's good. But it's too bad that the Adamses and Sterankos did not stay longer—long enough to build on the experiences of their too brief periods of innovation and brilliance, long enough to profit from the mistakes and the successes of their experiments—long enough, that is, to help elevate the art of the comics to whatever heights it might achieve in the most flexible of its formats.

It is ironic that the economics of the industry have for so much of its history worked against the art—not always with success, mind you, and not universally, with every single cartoonist, but often enough to establish a tendency that prevailed until the 1980s, when, at long last, the circumstances began to change, at first slowly, then with dramatic alacrity, yielding, finally, a cornucopia of works in different genres, all challenging to the inventive enterprise of their creators, who, increasingly, produced the whole artifact, concocting the plot, writing the dialogue, and penciling and inking the drawings. Comic books thereby verged on the cusp of becoming works of art rather than being the soulless, stamped-out products of a factory.

All that creativity is brought on, as it was for Al Capp, by the money it promises. And it is ever thus.

Simply, cartoonists at their drawing boards, all by Eugene Zimmerman, famed "Zim," and all taken from the vintage **How to Draw Funny Pictures** by E.C. Matthews.

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

THE CROSSGEN QUAD SYSTEM

by Bill Baker

While common wisdom would have fans believe that the creative system at the heart of upstart publisher CrossGen Comics revolutionary approach to making comics is merely a revival of the Marvel Comics Bullpen of old, the truth of the matter is a little more complicated than that. This is because of the simple fact that, contrary to what Stan Lee's editorials of the time would you believe, that now legendary Marvel Bullpen did not exist in any kind of real fashion. However, that didn't stop the founding visionaries of CrossGen from tapping into the essence of that concept, and working to improve upon it in a number of significant ways that have resulted in not just a better run and more friendly working environment, but also in radical improvements in communication between artists, creator involvement, quality control and, ultimately, the final product.

Or, as Mark Alessi, Publisher and CEO, recalled with a laugh, "When John Romita, Sr., visited us, he told us that the much-heralded Marvel Bullpen never existed in reality. And, in fact, we had copied something that sounded great on paper, but had never in fact been implemented at Marvel." Alessi continued by noting that, "As much as conceptually the bullpen was the primary, driving and baseline idea behind taking a look at how to make better comics, the fact that I came from a technology background, and the fact that we designed this entire organizational structure, oddly enough, in a similar vein to building software development products, had as much to do with the concept underlying how we built the bullpen as the actual 'myth of the bullpen' that Jack Kirby, and Stan Lee, Marie Severin and Johnny Romita were all supposedly a part of."

Ian Feller, the Media Relations guru for the young publisher, minces no words when asked about the roots of their creative system. "Well, first, we don't consider it a bullpen. We consider it our art studio, or our quad system. A bullpen is something that Marvel supposedly used back in the day that we've come to find out was not really true." Asked to list the various influences and ideas that helped form this hybrid system, Feller noted that, "We based our system on some of the things we learned from Marvel, some of the things that we've learned from some of the other companies, like Top Cow, and some of the things that we learned from Disney, from their animation studios, and then even some stuff that Mark Alessi had learned from being in the technology field, where people were software developers. All of those were incorporated together to form a system that we felt...would produce the best comics on a timely basis by keeping [teams] working together, getting the creative juices flowing, having people working competitively, in a friendly way, against each other [all] to make the product better."

Which helps define the bottom line just as much, if not more, than any monetary or profitability concerns do at CrossGen. "It's a quality control function," asserts Alessi. "One of the problems in this business is [that] we keep improving our technology, and our ability to make a product, but we don't make a better product frequently. And we *should.*

"So our thought pattern was, 'What's the problem...?' When we looked and saw how people built comics, you have a writer who lives in Maine, and you have an editor who works in New York City, and you have a penciler who lives in LA, and you have an inker who lives in Orlando and a colorist who lives in Minneapolis, and lettering is farmed out to a firm in San Diego, and production and design is farmed out to an in-house group in New York City. Look at how many players you have trying to build one product! And if you're integrating that product across, let's say, multiple crossovers or a crossover type concept story, think of how much worse that gets when you multiply those factors times

multiple editors, and multiple writers, etc., etc.

"We took all of those functional aspects of building a comic and put it under one roof. So, if you have a question, well, you walk ten feet and ask someone. If you're going to lay out a plot, you lay it out with the entire *team*. Do you know how much value a writer gets from walking through a plot with an entire team—penciler, inker, colorist? Because they get to suggest all sorts of other potential storytelling-type avenues to follow that might better allow the writer get his point across."

Which only begins to scratch the surface of the reasons the CrossGen method pays off so well creatively. Within the quad system, Feller explained, "Everybody works together. Each creative team can sit down together and bang out ideas. They can hammer out points. If the writer presents a plot, and then the penciler can envision a different way [of doing it], he's right there to discuss it. He can walk into the writer's office and say, 'Hey, I see this as an overhead shot, instead of an under shot. What do you think?' instead of faxing it to him across the country, and the writer *hopes* that what shows up on the printed comic two months later is what he envisioned." This offers all of the creators involved a sense of security and teamwork missing in most other situations in comics today. As Feller noted, within those other systems, "Once it leaves [the writer's] hands, he really doesn't have much of a say in what happens. The same thing with the artist; once he pencils it, he sends it to an inker, he doesn't know what the inks are going to look like until he sees it in print. And once all three of them send it to a colorist, they have no idea what the quality is going to look like when it comes out in print.

"Here, everybody does. If the writer has questions, or the penciler wants to make a suggestion to the colorist, he just walks to the next desk over and says, 'Hey, I was thinking about some kind of special effect that I can't get with pencils here. Can you do it?' So everybody gets closer to their actual vision on paper than they would in a freelance situation."

Also, Feller explains, quality control and product improvement has been integrated right into the creative process. At CrossGen, "The friendly competition makes everybody work harder. That's why every page gets better. You know, from issue 1 to issue 32, the issues are getting better. But in every one of those issues, from page 1 to page 22, it gets better [as well]. Because *nobody* wants to be the guy that people walk around and look at [his work] and say, "Hey, that stuff isn't so good." All the pencilers post their work up on their quads, up on their boards, so everybody can see their progress and what their pages look like. So at least once or twice during the day, every other penciler, every other artist in the studio, walks around checking everybody's stuff out. And looking and saying, 'Wow, that stuff's great! I better get back and work harder,' or to get ideas, 'Hey, that's a nice perspective, or a nice angle; maybe I'll try using that, incorporating that into my book!' So nobody wants to be the guy that everybody says, 'Hey, your work really stinks this month!' So everybody works harder and harder every page." Not even the most established and revered CrossGen creator is immune from this friendly competition, said Alessi. "George Perez, when he comes here, and he comes here every other week to spend a day or two with us, he gets pushed to the next level, he says, because the competitive fire here is so high that *he* wants to do better. He doesn't want any of these kids to look better than him, so he works harder."

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the quad system involves everyone in not just the process, but in the final product in several ways, as well. As Alessi is quick to point out, "It also integrates the people into the final product. That doesn't seem to happen in regular comic book production in most instances today. But everyone here is involved with the product up until the minute we cut the disc and the make-ready to send to Quebecor. So all the nuances, all the final touches, all the special effects, everyone gets to work together on. And so the product becomes owned by all the people who developed it, instead of each person [having] had a little piece of the assembly line process. Wouldn't it be cool if everyone at a Ford plant got to be at the end of the line when the car rolled off, and saw what the finished product was and did final touch ups to make it a better vehicle? We get to do that here. And it also enforces something that I don't think a lot of people take into strong consideration today as a byproduct of our industry…[and that] is *pride*."

And it's that very quality, Alessi believes, that has helped set CrossGen's offerings apart from much of their competition. "There's an ownership of the product that exists and permeates the entire team. It's hard to explain what value that has, but these guys feel like they've signed their name to every one that goes out the door. And that kind of pride will show in how you do your work—the quality of your work is improving—and how you interrelate and work well with your peers."

It also shows in the company's impeccable on-time delivery, their rising orders, and in the consistent, if not consistently improving, high quality of their books. With more than a little note of pride in his voice, Feller states that, "We've published successfully for nearly three years without missing a ship date, and I think that the quality gets better each month."

In fact, it should be noted that, on the rare occasion that a CrossGen book doesn't hit the stands as scheduled, it's only because the book was actually delivered *earlier* than expected. However, that doesn't mean that there haven't been some problems with lateness. On the contrary, the studio has had its fair share of internal deadline problems. It's just that no one has allowed it to turn into a problem with delivering the product as promised. As Alessi explains, "You know, if we're late on a book—and don't get me wrong, we've been late on books before—but we've just never

missed [a ship date], because two or three other inkers will go do background blacks for an inker. Or a colorist will do flats for a colorist. Or pencilers will suggest alternative layouts to other pencilers. Or people will come stay late and do dialogue and proofing later. I mean, they actually care about each other, and the other part is that they own 25% of this company."

Which points out one of the more radical departures from the norm. Most creators today are laboring under the same kind of contracts that were first put into place at the dawn of comic book publishing, a situation which means that they do the majority of the work, but derive relatively little compensation in return, and most of that is in one-time page rate payments. At CrossGen, the system is set up in a radically different manner, as Alessi is quick to point out. "We build commercial entertainment products, and we build them in such a way that everyone benefits from shared success. If you build compensation programs that pull people together, then don't be surprised when they come together. If you build compensation programs that separate people into almost some sort of a financial caste system, don't be surprised when they don't root for each other or work well together. In every business I've ever been associated with, the people who sit down and write compensation programs try and align compensation programs with their [company's and employees'] goals. In comics we seem to build compensation programs that make absolutely no sense whatsoever."

Asked if there had ever been any discussion concerning compensation for any particular individual's creative contributions to the company, Alessi responded that, "We eliminated that entire silly nonsense of creator's rights. Give me a break, 'creator's rights'! The company *owns* the product. We just gave all the employees part of the *company*. Seems to me that we built a compensation program that was designed to make them all root for each other. People love it when Brandon [Peterson]'s book does well, or Greg Land becomes [a] top 10 [artist] in *Wizard*, and *Sojourn* sells out. Because, eventually, part of that goes into their pockets. Isn't that the way things should be?"

Or, as Feller points out, "We're trying to change things for the positive. People, for as long as comics have been in existence, have done things the same way. No one's ever tried things as radically different as we have; as far as this approach to doing comics all in the same place; as far as the approach to running this like a business and not just some fun company out of our basement; an approach to letting employees own a stake in it—profit sharing, equity sharing. *No* publisher has ever tried that for fear that, if it worked, the guys on top would be losing some money. The guys at any other publisher, the big wigs there—maybe the top 2% of any company—make the bulk of the revenue on anything. If the movie's made at any other publisher, the guy that's lettering the comic doesn't get a piece of that. He just gets his page rate. He doesn't even get a salary, he gets a page rate. So he sees *no* benefit from any of that. But here, if a movie's made, everybody benefits. If one comic outsells another, everybody benefits. If we strike a deal to make toys or video games, everybody benefits. So that's where the camaraderie and team work come from: Everybody's trying to help each other along because everybody benefits.

"Here, everybody gets that. Everybody gets a piece of the action. Everybody gets health insurance, benefits, a steady paycheck.... Who doesn't want [that]? Whether you work at McDonalds or IBM, you get that kind of steady thing. But if you work in comics, you don't. You never know where your next meal's coming from, or your next paycheck, or whether you're going to be able to pay the rent. Here, everybody can do their best work because they're secure in the fact that, two weeks from now, they get another paycheck.... You do your five pages a week, you get your one book out every five weeks, it's published monthly, and you're set." Feller concluded by observing that, "People see the work coming out of here, and they're amazed at how we've gotten people to do such good work. But it's a simple thing: If you give them the right environment, and give them security, they're gonna produce good work because they have an investment [in it]."

Asked if he had any comment on the idea that some pundits have put forth, that the CrossGen system is nothing more than "assembly line comics," Alessi was more than forthright, "Aw, come on! This is silly. It's silly for people to even say it! Every large, [potentially] thriving comic book enterprise is [clearly based upon the concept of] creativity on demand, OK? That's the way it is. That's the way it works. It works in film, it works in TV, it works in magazines; why wouldn't it work in comic books? People aren't doing stuff on spec here. They're being paid to make a living. We expect that this is creativity on demand. We just give them an environment that fosters their ability to do their best creative, interrelated work."

And, in point of fact, many of their creators are rediscovering their love of comics while working for CrossGen. "They're finding that they have a love of the job. I mean, a lot of them hated this [business], and were going to leave, just before they got here," Alessi confided. But, now, "They're finding a love of building great comics because they're not asked to do two pages a day to make a living; they're asked to do five pages a week. They're asked to deliver a finished comic book every five weeks, and they get to pour themselves into it. They get the time to show that it's an art form, and they get to pour their love into it."

So, while it might not be perfect, or for everyone, the CrossGen quad system—with its strong allure of direct involvement in the creative process coupled with a guarantee of fair benefits, equity and profit sharing—seems to be offering its creators and support personnel the closest thing to a dream job in comics.

COMICS IN THE CLASSROOM BUILDING BRIDGES

TONY PANACCIO ON CROSSGEN COMICS

Interview by Bill Baker

Just about every fan of comic books remembers the terrible experience of hearing their beloved hobby ridiculed by one or more of their educators during their school days. Even worse are the memories of having an issue of a favorite comic being confiscated by an irate teacher.

Well, if the good folks at CrossGen Comics have their way, this will all soon be a thing of the past. In fact, it just might be the teachers themselves who will be handing out the comics to their students. That's because the upstart Florida-based publisher has instituted a new program called Bridges that uses comics to help foster good reading skills and habits. Designed over the course of a year by a small group of master teachers lead by CrossGen staffer Beth Widera, herself an ex-teacher, Bridges was designed with practicality and general suitability in mind. Now in the beta testing stage, there are nearly a dozen schools scattered across the country hosting Pilot Programs for Bridges, with a steady stream of inquiries coming in almost daily expressing interest in adopting it elsewhere.

Curiosity piqued, we tracked down Tony Panaccio, Senior VP of Product Development for CrossGen, to get the basic facts and the story behind the development of this innovative new effort.

CBM: Where did the idea for the Bridges program get started?

Tony Panaccio: I think the original impetus really came from Mark [Alessi, President and CEO of CrossGen]. The conceptualization and how to make it work was primarily Beth [Widera, MegaCon Manager and CrossGen's Director of Education] and her team, but when it came down to the idea of using comics in the schools in a *true* value-added program, not just some marketing dodge, that entirely came from Mark.

Mark was a voracious reader, and still is a voracious reader; he reads two or three books a week, and part of his lament was that he couldn't seem to get this generation as interested in reading as he is. As a publisher of a comic book company, it just made sense for him to take the tools that he's using in the marketplace now to try to generate that enthusiasm from a new and younger audience who haven't had, up to now, the benefit of comics in their reading experiences at an early age.

CBM: How was the program developed once Mark had the idea?

Panaccio: He basically brought it to Beth for the conceptual development of what would work, and he brought it to me on the sales marketing and internal management end, to make sure that we had a product that we could deliver to the marketplace in channels that exist, and also in new channels that we would use the product to help create. At the end of the day, this is not the kind of thing where you can separate the marketing end and the conceptual end, because if you're going to market anything to teachers, if you're going to produce anything for schools, you *have* to solve a problem. You can't just say, "Hey, look, isn't this great material!" and do a little song and dance. There is no success of style over substance in the education marketplace.

Either you add value with the product, or it will sit on the shelf and no one will pay attention to it. You'll be among the many other companies that market garbage to schools, because they want to try to get the eyeballs of the kids. So Beth is very integral in becoming the absolute reality check in saying, "OK, *here's* where you have a value add, and here's where you *don't*."

CBM: I know, Tony, that you've been concerned about making the program affordable, and assuring that buyers will get real value for their investment. How did you go about ensuring those points?

Panaccio: Well, actually it was just by nature of the fact that it was CrossGen doing it. If we were, say, a company that publishes educational material as our core competency, we would literally have to go out and create the content on which the educational tools would be based. In this case, the

story content already exists. So on a pure marketing level, if you're looking at a cost benefit analysis of producing this product for a particular marketplace, [it's perfect].

Your pricing is always based on cost of goods. If you're making candy, if you're making comic books, if you're making footballs to sell in Wal-Mart, it's all about cost of goods. It costs us less to produce this material because we had already created *Meridian*, we had already created *Ruse*. It existed in a format that could be manipulated with very little variable costs, so all we really had to do was bring experienced classroom teachers in to carve out activities based on the existing content.

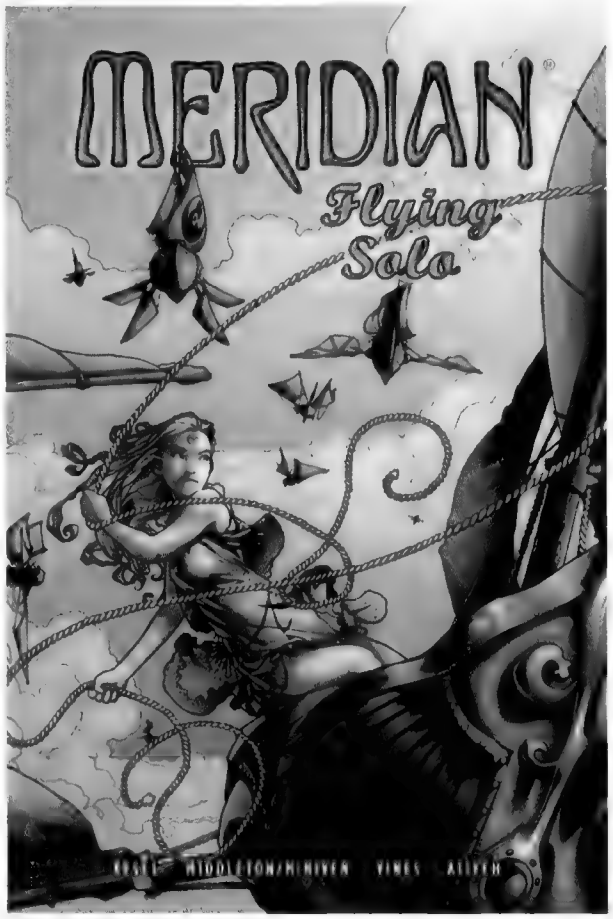
So the ability of CrossGen to offer this at a lower price point than most other comparable materials is based on the intrinsic nature of CrossGen's ability to repurpose its existing comics in a new way. We didn't have to pay for new writers and new artists and new people to come in and create something specifically for the educational program. We simply took what we had, gave it a round of edits to make it more palatable in mainstream classrooms, and then let it fly.

CBM: You just brought up a couple of interesting points, first, what made these two particular books such a good fit for this education program, and, second, what kinds of concerns drove the editing process that these existing texts had to go through to fit the program?

Panaccio: From the marketing standpoint, part of our challenge was to get teachers and school administrators to overcome their existing impression and connotation of comics. Because if you say "comics" to them, they think Superman, Batman; big muscular guys beating up super villains and there being lots of violence, and there being lots of stuff—costumes, capes and tights—that really isn't relevant to what they're trying to get kids to read in the first place.

So *Meridian* and *Ruse* look the most *not* like those connotations. They absolutely defeat all of those existing arguments on why a lot of people *don't* want to use comics in the classroom. There are no super-heroes, capes and tights, though they are relevant to bridging over to *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Edgar Allen Poe, etc., etc.

In addition to that, there is precious little violence. There is plenty of conflict in *Meridian*, but Sephie doesn't go out every issue and beat the bejezus out of some super villain. And when there is



violence, there are dire consequences shown for that violence, so that violence is never shown as a solution to problems. In fact, in most of our books, violence begets *more* problems. Also, *Ruse* looks very, very different from what most anyone who's even remotely thought about reading comic books would think is in a mainstream comic. So I think, for those reasons, *Ruse* and *Meridian* were picture perfect choices for the project.

As far as the edits go, precious little has been removed or altered. I think we changed one word in *Ruse*. On the first page of the first issue, the culprit of the original crimes says, "Damn you, Archer!" So we changed that to, "Curse you!" And the rest of it was very, very minor things. Hemlines and necklines on some of the female characters' outfits have been altered to make them less suspect to more conservative eyeballs. That's about it. In fact, I would challenge our inveterate readers to even find the changes in these editions.

But, again, it's the type of situation where we wanted to make the changes so that we'd absolutely maximize the potential for this material to get into *every* school, in *every* geographic region, answering that whole "Well, is it going to play in Peoria?" question quite resoundingly.

CBM: It sounds like you've already begun testing the program. How'd you implement it, and how's the reception from schools and their representatives been?

Panaccio: We thought it was going to be very difficult, because we thought, worst case scenario, of having to go through a lot of approvals, a lot of testing, a lot of committee work, in order to get the content accepted by certain school districts, and counties and so forth. And what we've discovered is that it's a lot more of a pull than a push, if you understand marketing terminology.

As soon as word got out about what we were doing, and then we posted a few pages as a preview up on the website [http://www.crossgen.com/education/], and talked about it in a few interviews, we received dozens of emails from teachers around the country who were existing CrossGen fans saying, "Gimme, gimme, gimme! I *have* to use this for my classroom. I'll show this to the principal myself, and I'll get approval to use it, but you've got to let me have it!"

I've shipped out, as of this morning, more than 150 copies of *Meridian* to teachers all around the country, and I'm waiting for my copies of *Ruse* to come in from the printer. I sewed up a pilot program in Wisconsin, just today. We have Orange County, California. Bakersfield, California. Very soon we should have Nevada. I'm working on finalizing both Phoenix and Colorado this week. So while we thought it was going to be dif-

ficult getting some pilots up and running, it's been quite the opposite.

We talked earlier about solving a problem. The teachers who are comics fans can absolutely see the value in the Bridges program. They connect the dots. There is no need to "sell" to them. They would love to have more of these types of projects out there. So we're finding it very easy to get interest, but it's taxing our abilities to keep up with the interest! [Laughter] We'll get there, we'll get there.

On the one hand, it's amazing that we were able to accomplish what we've got so far. But on the flip side of that, the worst thing you can do in marketing is create something that you can't manage the demand for, and that's basically what we've done. [More laughter] We're fixing that and, within in a week or two, we should be able to keep what everyone wants.

CBM: When do you see it going into full-fledged production?

Panaccio: It already is.

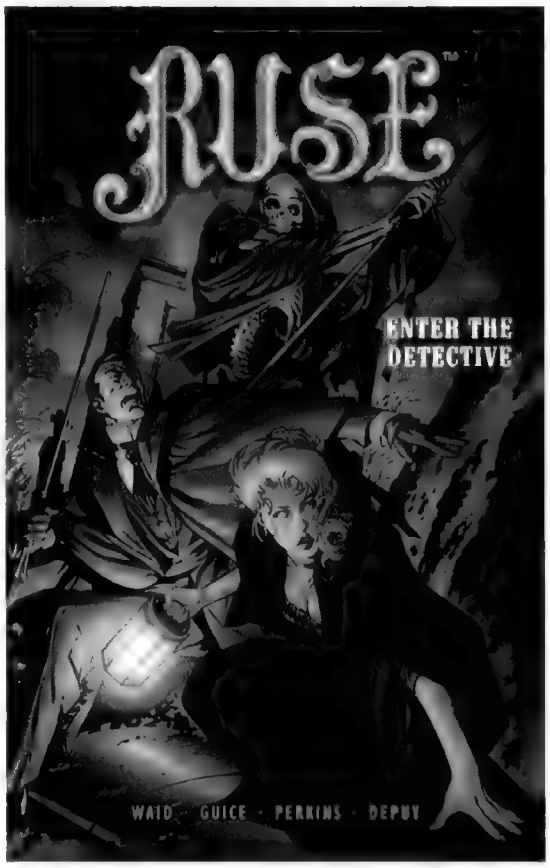
CBM: OK. Would you be able to supply a majority of the school districts across the country when you've finished ramping up the program?

Panaccio: We'd be able to supply basically anyone who wants it. And, including that, we're also creating a Parent's Edition, which is entirely self-contained on CD ROM, for home schooling.

CBM: Is there any real difference between the two versions, aside from their formats?

Panaccio: No, there is no difference at all in that respect. I think teachers *need* to have the hard copy for practicality, just because there are no computer standards for schools across the country, and the mass majority of teachers don't have access—on a wide scale—to the use of computers everyday in the classroom. So having a hard copy makes it easy for them to photocopy and use as paper in the classroom. There is no such thing as a "paperless office," no matter how bad we strive for it, and there is even less of a paperless classroom. We are decades away from that. So having the hard copy, which is expensive to produce for schools, makes it easier for the teachers to implement.

On the flip side, many parents who home school *live* by the computer. In fact, most of the support groups for mainstream home schooling are online. So we expect a great deal of demand from parents, as well, and we'll be showing off the Parent's Edition at the 2003 conventions. We even sold some units at MegaCon.



CBM: How would the cost of the Parent's Edition compare with other home schooling programs? I think you mentioned, before the interview began, a price comparison with the well-known Hooked on Phonics program.

Panaccio: Hooked on Phonics is a module that has some hard copies included, and they deliver for anywhere from $200 to $300, depending upon the edition. They've grown tremendously, and they produce a wonderful product.

Ours is different. We use different content, and we don't have as many hard copy materials included in the package, so we would be looking at a price point that's about one-third of what Hooked on Phonics delivers, depending upon what our final price run looks like. Remember, even though we don't have the extra cost of creating the books entirely from scratch, there are still costs in employee teachers to constantly update, to constantly work on the program itself.

CBM: From earlier conversations, I know that the name of the program was carefully chosen to represent what the Bridges project actually does for kids. So what are some of the bridges you're trying to build here?

Panaccio: I think it's multiple. I want kids to learn better reading comprehension and bridge themselves from multimedia content into books with white pages and black text. We want kids to bridge into the culture of reading, where a kid will play a DVD until the disk cracks, or play a video game six or seven times over, but when they pick up a book, once they finish that last page, it goes back on the shelf and they treat it like they've just climbed a mountain; they don't have to do it again. I think one of the regions we're trying to help them cross is the bridge into reading the same material over and over again. Kids will read a comic book or a graphic novel over and over again. That's part of the *culture* of reading.

We're also trying to bridge kids from the genres that we publish in our stories—fantasy and adventure in *Meridian*, and certainly mystery in *Ruse*—and bridge them over into classic literature. Heroic fiction is nothing new. It goes back to the tribesmen sitting around the campfire, to the ancient Greek, Roman and Norse mythology, and epics like *Beowulf* and Homer's *Iliad*. We take those things, and borrow more from [Joseph] Campbell and [Bill] Moyers, and Shakespeare and [Isaac] Asimov and [Ray] Bradbury, than we do from [Stan] Lee and [Jack] Kirby. So we want to build bridges from the medium of comics and certain genres into classic authors who write classic literature.

Archie ON TV

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CLASS OF 64?

by Dan Johnson

When it comes to adapting a comic book feature for film, the end product can be hit or miss. In regards to comic book properties that became pilots for television series, I've seen a few that were better off in the cold, dark vaults in which they are buried. I've also seen some comic book adaptations that made it out which should have stayed buried!

On the other hand, occasionally such a work comes along that is really quite good. In the case of the *Archie* pilot that was produced in 1964, that is certainly the case. It was funny and as enjoyable, if not more so, than some of the Archie comics of the time. It was, for the most part, very well cast and if the pilot was any indication the show could have had a long, healthy life for many, many seasons. I cannot for the life of me understand why the series never sold.

It was produced at Screen Gems, the television division of Columbia Pictures. The men who were responsible all had solid backgrounds in television and film production and were almost all very familiar with the making of sit-coms. Their previous and post-Archie projects should give a good indication of their talent.

The show's producer, Harry Ackerman, is a true legend in the field of American sit-coms. Before Harry met Archie, he had been responsible for ABC's hit fantasy comedy *Bewitched*. After *Archie* failed to sell, Ackerman went on to produce Sally Field's two big television shows, *Gidget* (featuring a teen-aged character who clicked with a television audience) and *The Flying Nun*. America's favorite teenager couldn't have been in better hands.

The *Archie* director was Gene Nelson, whose resume includes some of the most beloved television series of the '50's, '60s and '70s. Before directing, Nelson began his show business career as an actor who appeared in a number of musicals. But it is directing that he is remembered for today, on a variety of shows from westerns (*The Rifleman*) to sit-coms (*The Andy Griffith Show*, *F-Troop*, *I Dream of Jeanie*) to police/detective dramas (*Hawaii Five-0*, *Barnaby Jones*, *Starsky and Hutch*, *Quincy*) to science fiction and fantasy series (*Star Trek*, *The Invisible Man*, *Fantasy Island*). Nelson also directed two Elvis Presley films, *Kissin' Cousins* (on which he also shares a writer's credit with Gerald Drayson Adams) and *Harum Scarum*.

Gene Nelson, hoofer, actor and director, best known as "Will" in the movie **Oklahoma**, directed the **Archie** pilot.

The old show business adage is, "If it ain't on the page, it ain't on the stage." Translation: A bad script can't be saved by even the best performers. In this case, Screen Gems was smart to do the one thing some failed pilots never think to do, mainly get it right from the start instead of hoping to fix script problems once the series is sold. Screenwriter R.S. Allen (using his other credit name, Ray Allen) wrote the *Archie* pilot. Allen's credits before *Archie* include *The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and *Gomer Pyle, USMC*. He later went on to co-write several films with Harvey Bullock (his most frequent collaborator) that were directed by former Sid Caesar regular Howard Morris. These films include *Who's Minding the Mint*, *With Six You Get Eggroll* (with Gwen Bagni and Paul Dubov) and *Don't Drink the Water* (with Woody Allen). In 1969, Allen became an executive producer

along with Bullock on the comedy anthology, *Love American Style*.

Allen's script was titled "The Electric Cupid." Archie lacks funds with the big school dance just a few days away. He is also torn about whom he should take: Betty or Veronica. Archie asks for his father's expert opinion on how men and women wind up together (in the show, Mr. Andrews is a psychiatrist). Mr. Andrews' advice is that it is propinquity, or closeness and nearness, that determines who pairs up with who.

This ties into the central plot as Archie tries to help out poor Mr. Weatherbee, who is in hot water with Mrs. Finch, the president of the PTA. Mrs. Finch is concerned because some of the more bashful and shy kids aren't turning out for Riverdale High's dances. Archie has a brainstorm to use Veronica's father's new computer to match up the kids at Riverdale High based on their likes, dislikes and common interests. Archie figures to use his father's advice to help Weatherbee get 100% attendance for the next dance. Archie convinces Mrs. Finch that if a computer says the matches are perfect, the kids will believe in their selected dates and will have no reason not to attend the dance.

Meanwhile, Veronica is jealous because Archie has asked Betty to be his date Saturday night. Veronica does what Veronica does best. She blackmails Archie into taking her, otherwise he doesn't get to use daddy's computer for the dating service. Veronica winds up withholding the use of the computer when Reggie convinces her that Archie is only pretending to break his date with Betty. The end result is that Archie has no date for Saturday night, and worse yet no computer to match up the kids of Riverdale High.

Desperate to stay out of hot water with his principal, Archie talks Jughead into becoming the brains inside a fake computer (I seem to remember this particular plot point being used in an old Archie comic digest that I had as a kid). Mr. Andrews sums up the main point of this deception when he gives his approval for it. He concludes that so much about love is an illusion. This fake computer is really no bigger an illusion than music, flowers, perfume or even the moon. So long as it is just a means to get the boys and girls together, he sees no harm in it. Archie uses that same argument on Weatherbee after he finds out Archie and Jughead have paired up just about every boy and girl in school with their fake computer. Archie points out that the kids they paired up all seem happy and content with their dates, having given propinquity a push in the right direction. Weatherbee certainly can't argue that the young man didn't get results, and ensured 100% attendance for the dance.

Archie's work is done until he goes the extra mile at the pilot's end. On the night of the dance, Archie is dateless. After all, he has managed to tick off both Betty and Veronica. Outside the dance, he spies the most bashful girl in his class, a young lady named Mildred. She doesn't have a date this night because she was too shy to show up when the computer cards were matched and she never turned hers in. Archie tells the girl that her missing card is why he has no date, she was his perfect match all along. With a winning smile and a touch of good-natured charm, Archie convinces Mildred to be his date. As they walk into the dance arm-in-arm, the end credits roll over the catchy *Archie* theme song, written for the pilot by Joseph Weiss (A sit-com vet who did music for *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver*. Weiss also did the music for the 1980s version of *Ripley's Believe It or Not*).

The casting, for the most part, was wonderful. In particular, the three actors that seemed primed to take center stage for this series are fantastic: John Simpson as Archie, William Schallert as Mr. Andrews and Roland Winters as Mr. Weatherbee.

Young and blond John Simpson does a good job bringing Archie to life, playing him as a smart operator who is always looking for the angle (but more often than not, it's for the benefit of someone else). Simpson makes Archie seem like a pretty nice guy all around with the same wonderful blend of good-heartedness and humor that makes the comic book Archie so appealing. The pity is that this is the only thing I have ever seen the actor in. I'm not even sure he did anything outside of the *Archie* pilot.

For example, in the pilot's teaser, we see Archie's latest invention, meant to allow him to steal a few more minutes of sleep. It's an elaborate system of strings and pulleys throughout Archie's room (making it resemble a large spider's web). When his mother presses a button downstairs (thinking it's an alarm to wake Archie up), it puts the web into motion. One string pulls the on switch for Archie's tape player with a recording of Archie yawning and greeting the new morning. Then a set of strings moves a pair of shoes up and down on the floor, to make his parents think he is up and at it while he keeps on sleeping. Another string pulls up the window shade and at the same time pulls the prop from his window. Yet another string turns on the shower. While all this goes on around him, Archie continues to sleep the sleep of someone who thinks he's pulled one over on his parents. He would have gotten away with it too, if Mr. Andrews hadn't started wondering about all the commotion in Archie's room. When Mr. Andrews goes upstairs to investigate, he finds Archie fast asleep. Archie explains

William Schallert, the **Archie** pilot's Mr. Andrews, serving similar duties on the same-era **The Patty Duke Show**.

that he really needed the extra rest. After all, he did stay up till almost 4:00 am setting his new invention up!

Okay, so Shakespeare it isn't. The teaser, like much of the show itself, is corny compared to today's "sophisticated" sit-coms. But it is funny and certainly this is a better opening gag than you could find from some other sit-coms of the day.

Credits for the 1964 Archie Pilot

Cast

John Simpson ..... Archie Andrews
William Schallert ..... Mr. Andrews
Roland Winters ..... Mr. Weatherbee
Unknown ..... Veronica Lodge
Unknown ..... Betty Cooper
Jean Vanderpyl ..... Mrs. Andrews
Mary Grace Canfield ..... Miss Grundy
Jerry Brite ..... Jughead
Maggie Pierce ..... Miss Kenney
Harriet MacGibbon ..... Mrs. Finch
Kathy Bennett ..... Buffie
Karen Green ..... Mildred
Wayne Adams ..... Reggie

Crew

Gene Nelson ..... Director
Ray Allen .....Writer
Winston O'Keefe ..... Producer
Harry Ackerman ... Executive Producer
Joseph Weiss ..... Musical Score
Frank Carson . Director of Photography
Ross Bellah and Carl Anderson
..... Art Directors
Gerard J. Wilson, ACE ..... Film Editor
Morris Hoffman ..... Set Decorator
Ben Lane, SMA ... Make-Up Supervisor
Irving Friedman ..... Music Supervisor
Igo Kantar ..... Music Editor
James Nelson .... Sound Effects Editor
Seymour Friedman ... Prod. Supervisor
Lawrence Werner
..... Post-Production Supervisor
Eddie Saeta ..... Assistant Director
Produced in Assoc with Edward M. Gray

The teaser works for two simple reasons: Simpson and Schallert. Simpson's charming manner and William Schallert's combination of amusement and understanding frustration carry the scene and manage to make it work. William Schallert has always been one of my favorite character actors, with far more range and comedic flair than some people give him credit for. Schallert has played character parts in a number of shows and films. He made his name as the father on *The Patty Duke Show,* and it looks like Schallert was all ready to slip into the role of Archie's father. In fact, if I don't miss my guess, this pilot may have been the first assignment that Schallert worked on when *The Patty Duke Show* finished its run. I especially liked the scenes with Schallert and Simpson and consider them the best in this pilot.

The casting of Roland Winters as Mr. Weatherbee is also great. Winters is most famous as the oriental film detective Charlie Chan. In the *Archie* pilot, he plays Mr. Weatherbee to a "T." I especially liked the use of internal dialogues that Weatherbee has to sort out the "pat him on the back/strangle him" relationship he has with Archie. If the pilot is any indication, Simpson would have had most of his scenes with Schallert and Winters and the relationship with these two father figures would have been at the foreground of the series. Meanwhile, the interaction of Archie with his peers would have been kept to the background, an interesting switch from the comics.

The copy of the pilot I obtained for this article doesn't have a complete set of opening credits, only John Simpson's is intact. Schallert and Winters aren't mentioned at the end of the show, so their credits must have been in the opening along with Simpson's. This would lend support to the idea that they would have been central characters in a series (given each man's previous television and film credits, it would have been insulting for them not to be listed in the opening credits).

The rest of the Riverdale gang is where the pilot hits some bumps. The kids runs from so-so to dead on. Jerry Brite, who plays Jughead, is perhaps the most "off" of all the actors cast as Archie characters. My main gripe is that he doesn't look the part (Brite's a tad beefier than the string-bean Jughead of the comics and shorter than just about everyone else in the cast). Juggie's ravenous appetite isn't shown at all. And Brite's Jughead has a mad crush for a female classmate named Buffie, so this Jughead isn't a confirmed woman-hater. (Buffie was played by actress Kathy Bennett, whose biggest success was a role in the 1963 film *Spencer's Mountain.* Bennett does okay in her part here, but it is rather small compared to the roles from the comics.)

Roland Winters, the **Archie** Mr. Weatherbee, both as (the last) movie Charlie Chan and inset in a publicity portrait.

Wayne Adams, who plays Archie's nemesis Reggie, is tolerable. The actor makes his Reggie out to be as big a snake in the grass as he is in the comics. Reggie manages to get Archie sent to Weatherbee's office once (which allows Archie to overhear his principal's plight with Mrs. Finch), he gets Veronica ticked off with Archie so he can't use her dad's computer and he exposes Archie's fake computer to Mr. Weatherbee. Needless to say, he is one busy son of a sea-cook! The one gripe: Adams simply looks too old to be playing a teenager. He looks to be in his early to mid-twenties.

A fine job of casting was done with actress Karen Green who plays Mildred, the shy and timid classmate who Archie winds up with. She has just a couple of

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WHEN AMERICA'S FAVORITE TEENAGER PLAYS HOOKY FROM THE COMICS:

ARCHIE ADAPTIONS THROUGH THE DECADES

by Dan Johnson

The 1964 Archie *pilot that starred John Simpson was the first effort by television executives to bring America's Favorite Teenager to the small screen. Sadly, especially since it failed, it was also the best that has been done so far. The others have ranged from pretty good to just plain terrible. Below is a list of these good and not-so-good productions taking Archie and the Riverdale Gang out of the comic book medium.*

Archie Andrews: The Radio Series

Before television, from the late 1940s to the early 1950s, Archie had a fairly successful run in the medium of radio. *Archie Andrews* was a weekly program that starred actor Bob Hastings as Archie. Hastings went on to later fame as the weaselly Lt. Elroy Carpenter on the '60s sit-com *McHale's Navy*. Throughout his career, Hastings has worked on a number of voice-over projects. Besides Archie, Hastings gave voice to another teen sensation of the comics, Superboy, in 1966's *The New Adventures of Superman*. Most modern animation fans will know him best though for his work as Commissioner James Gordon on the various animated Batman series of the '90s. A few shows from *Archie Andrews* radio series survive today and can be found as staples in most radio program catalogs.

Bob Hastings, radio's Archie, as "Carpy" in **McHale's Navy**.

Filmation's voice of Archie Andrews, Dallas McKennon. The date of this photograph was not available. McKennon did other major and minor voices on the various Archie animateds and similar shows for Filmation (**Groovy Goolies, Hardy Boys**) and others (Gumby on **Gumby,** miscellaneous Disney features back to **Sleeping Beauty**).

Filmation's Archie

From the late '60s to the early '70s, Archie was a regular on the CBS Saturday morning line-up thanks to the folks at Filmation. Overall, the shows were really pretty good. Also, the cartoons helped introduce two solid fixtures to the Archie universe: The Archies and Sabrina the Teenage Witch.

The first effort by Filmation, *The Archie Show*, was a half hour cartoon that featured stories based in part on the comic books, with a few jokes thrown in here and there that reminded me of the one-page gags in the comics. That first outing did well enough for the show to became *The Archie Comedy Hour*, then *Archie's Fun House* without too much variation in format. The strangest move came when the show became *Archie's TV Funnies*. In this series, Archie and the gang merely acted as hosts to break up segments that featured comic strip characters like Dick Tracy and Nancy. Finally the show became *The U.S. of Archie* in time for Archie and the gang to help celebrate the American Bicentennial.

One small bit of trivia, the voice of Jughead (and many others) was provided by actor and director Howard Morris, who is perhaps best know these days as Earnest T. Bass on *The Andy Griffith Show*.

Archie: ABC Saturday Comedy Special

Does anyone else out there remember this besides me? In 1978, ABC took a stab at a live-action Archie special. The

special featured sketches that were based on the comic book stories and also had the actors doing one-liners with animated

[continued on page 57]

Archie Does His Part:

Archie
GEE, ARCHIE, YOU'RE GOING AWFULLY FAST!
YEAH! ISN'T IT GREAT? AND I JUST LEARNED TO DRIVE YESTERDAY!
KEEP 'EM FLYING
RHS
61W35
HANG ONTO YOUR HATS, RIVERDALE... HERE COMES CHIE WITH HIS FIRST MPIN' JIVIN' JALOPY! BETTY COOPER SAYS ERYTHING MAKES A DISE BUT THE HORN.... AND RIGHT NOW HE'S FINDING OUT THAT HE ROUGHEST DISTANCE ETWEEN TWO POINTS A RIDE WITH..... ARCHIE!
WORDS ART
montano

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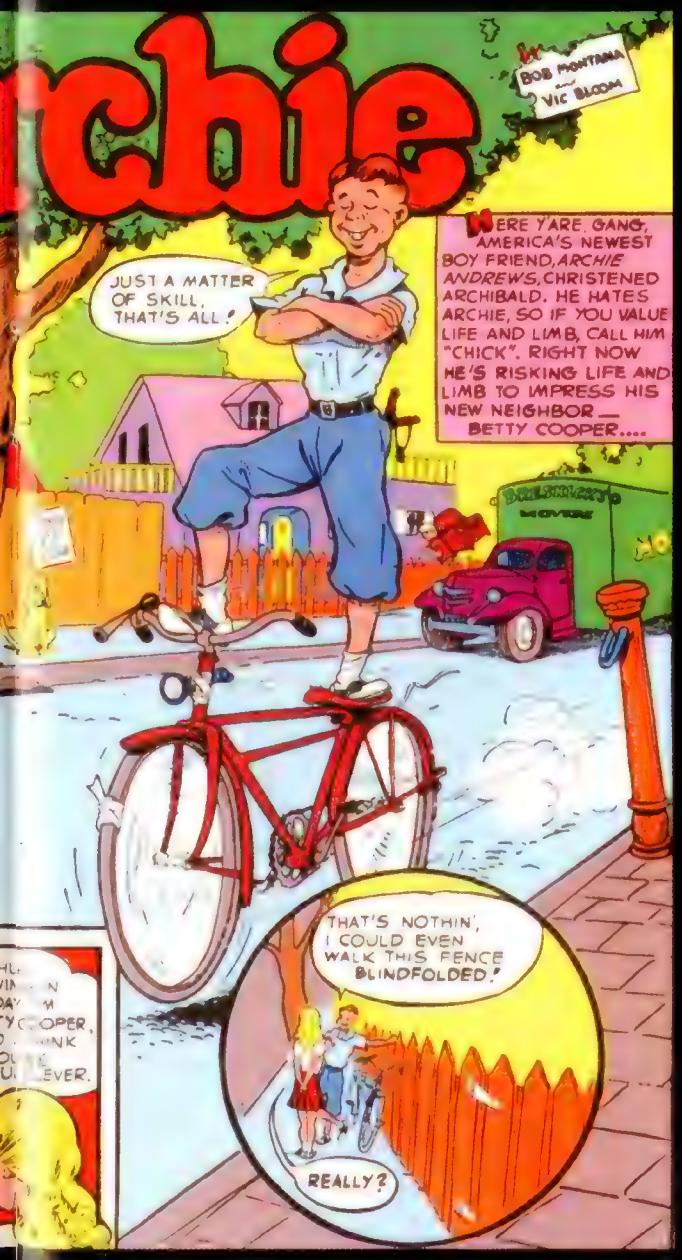
THE WORLD WAR II YEARS

by Paul Castiglia


chie
BOB MONTANA
VIC BLOOM
HERE Y'ARE, GANG, AMERICA'S NEWEST BOY FRIEND, ARCHIE ANDREWS, CHRISTENED ARCHIBALD. HE HATES ARCHIE, SO IF YOU VALUE LIFE AND LIMB, CALL HIM "CHICK". RIGHT NOW HE'S RISKING LIFE AND LIMB TO IMPRESS HIS NEW NEIGHBOR — BETTY COOPER....
JUST A MATTER OF SKILL, THAT'S ALL!
THAT'S NOTHIN', I COULD EVEN WALK THIS FENCE BLINDFOLDED!
REALLY?

United we stand. Those words are the very bedrock upon which the United States was founded. For many of those who served and lived through World War II, those weren't just words, but a way of life. Everyday, normal life. For World War II was different than other wars. This was the first war that took place in the age of mass media. Granted, back then mass media was limited to print, radio and motion pictures, but that was light years ahead of the media available in previous wars. Because people could listen to daily news broadcasts on the radio, watch newsreels in theaters and read the latest in the many newspapers and magazines of the day, there wasn't a person in America unaware of what Adolf Hitler and his fellow tyrants were up to. With a universally reviled villain on the world stage, how could Americans have been anything else but united?

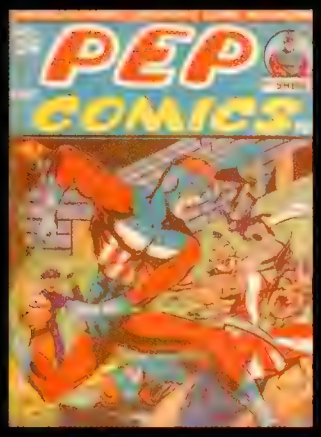
The spirit of patriotism and nationalism spread through America like wildfire. So much so that everyone felt compelled to do his or her "part." The government made it easy, by establishing war bonds and scrap metal collections for the war effort. The public was also urged to ration certain foods and materials needed to fight the war such as gasoline, rubber, shoes, silk, nylon, butter, sugar, chocolate, meat, milk and coffee. Civilians were encouraged to volunteer for jobs left vacant by the "boys" being sent off to war. The most enduring example is "Rosie the Riveter"—many women took jobs in manufacturing plants, once primarily the domain of the men.

Celebrities also did their part. They managed to entertain the troops via United Service Organizations (USO) shows as well as get the word out to the public about how they could help with live appearances at bond rallies, radio broadcasts and films with blatant World War II themes. Not just serious films, either—the world needed to laugh at its troubles so comedians Charlie Chaplin (*The Great Dictator*), Laurel & Hardy (*Air Raid Wardens*), Abbott & Costello (*Buck Privates*) and the Three Stooges (*You Nutzy Spy*) stepped up to the plate with timely fare. Even cartoon characters got into the act—from Donald Duck to Popeye to Bugs Bunny.

everyone's favorite animated heroes encouraged civilians to buy war bonds—when they weren't busy clobbering Hitler and his henchmen over the head with mallets!

Of course, comic book heroes got their licks in, too. The heroes of the Golden Age of comics—Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman—all had run-ins with the axis powers. Even more so, the patriotic heroes—led by the first ever, The Shield (published by MLJ, which later became Archie Comics), Captain America, Uncle Sam, The Star-Spangled Kid, Lady Liberty—flourished during this unique time. However, Golden Age comic books weren't only populated by super heroes: arriving on the scene in *Pep Comics* #22 (Dec 1941), Archie Andrews and his friends became an overnight sensation, and the genre of teenage humor comics was born!

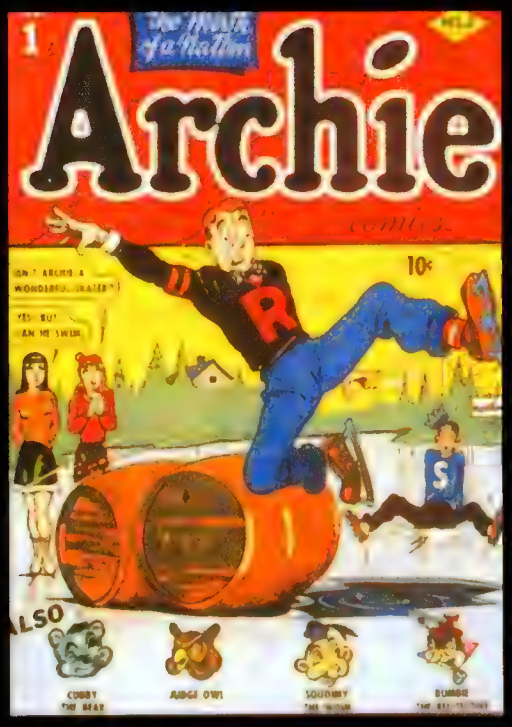
No, Archie and his friends weren't super-powered heroes. It would be far-fetched to show Jughead slugging it out with an armed storm trooper, even for a comic book! Nevertheless, the world's favorite comic book teens "did their part"—in stories that focused on the war effort at home. What better civilian characters to illustrate the war on the home front than typical teenagers?



Between 1943 and 1947, several World War II-themed stories starring Archie, Jughead, Betty and Veronica appeared in the pages of *Pep Comics* and *Archie Comics*. These ranged from brief mentions of things like "war shortages" and signs on picket fences reminding folks to, "Buy War Bonds;" to full-fledged stories that found the gang doing everything from volunteering at local businesses while the workforce was on the battlefield to suiting up as air raid wardens and junior commandoes! We'll focus on some of the best of these stories in this article.

What appears to be the earliest World War II-themed Archie story is also the most blatant. Indeed, the untitled tale from *Pep Comics* #39 (May 1943) didn't just acknowledge the war with a passing mention…it screamed out loud that war was here, and even a pristine comic book environ like Riverdale was fully aware of it! At least that's the impression one gets from the first page, what with Betty painting a dummy's face to look like Adolf Hitler!

Archie
Starring JUGHEAD
THIS IS ME, JUGHEAD!
AND WHO IS "THIS" AS IF YOU DON'T KNOW!
BANG
IT'S A SWELL APRIL DAY(IF IT DOESN'T SHOWER) AND WE FIND ARCHIE BUSILY HAMMERING IN HIS BACK YARD. BETTY SEEMS BUSY TOO! WONDER WHAT'S UP?
HYEH ARCH! WHATCHER DOIN'?
YOU'LL FIND OUT JUGHEAD! SOMETHING SPECIAL!
AIN'T THAT HITLER'S DUMMY BETTY?
UNHUNH! YOU SEE WE'RE GOING TO PUT THIS DUMMY IN THAT BOX...
AND EVERYONE WHO BUYS A WAR STAMP GETS A CHANCE TO HIT HITLER WITH A BASEBALL! THAT WAY WE'LL GET KIDS TO FILL UP THEIR WAR STAMP BOOKS!



"We're going to put this dummy in that box…and everyone who buys a war stamp gets a chance to hit Hitler with a baseball! That way we'll get kids to fill up their war stamp books!" explains Betty. (Think about that the next time you visit the dunking booth at a local carnival. Wouldn't you rather put your sandlot ball pitching skills to good use helping your country instead of trying to win some cheap prize?)

Of course, Jughead decides to try on the dummy's clothes and paint a mustache on his face and before you know it, he pops his head through the hole in the box! Before anyone realizes he's not the dummy, at least not literally, Jughead's been beaned with more balls than an underclassman in a dodge ball match!

Along the way, anti-Hitler sentiment abounds. From Archie exclaiming, "This pastes the last stamp in my book—now to see if I can paste this bozo!;" to the throngs singing, "The worms crawl in, the worms crawl out, we wish they'd crawl on Hitler's snout!," as they lay the wooden crate on the railroad tracks (they think the dummy's inside, not Hitler…er, I mean Jughead), this story pulls no punches. In fact, this is one of the few stories in the history of comics that actually merits the description, "it has to be seen to be believed!"

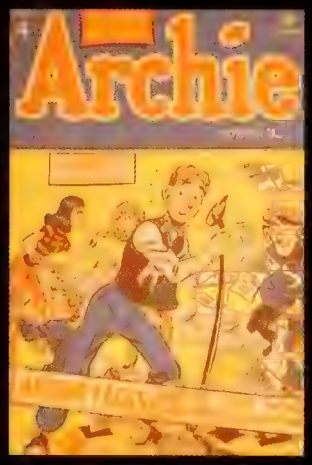
Next came a pair of Betty & Veronica stories…or as they were billed back then, "Veronica & Betty." Early on, the Archie editors must have realized the potential of Archie's supporting cast by spinning them off into their own stories. The girls don't just luminously shine in "Welcome Soliders" (*Archie Comics* #3, Summer 1943) and "Glamour in White" (*Archie Comics* #4 Sep/Oct 1943), they also prove they can be as patriotic—and hilarious—as Archie himself, getting into situations one could easily imagine Lucy and Ethel or Laverne and Shirley getting into.

NO. 3
Archie
comics
10¢
SORRY, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO GET OUT OF THIS JAM YOURSELF, ARCHIE!
WELL, JUST WHICH ONE OF US ARE YOU TAKING TO THE PROM, ARCHIE?

Veronica and Betty
IN
WELCOME SOLDIERS
I FEEL SO PATRIOTIC SENDING THIS LITTLE GIFT TO ARCHIE AT HIS UNCLE'S FARM! HE'LL APPRECIATE THESE LOVELY BOOKS!
A LETTER FROM ARCHIE, VERONICA! WHAT IN THE WORLD IS HE DOING ON A FARM?
WHY ALL THE BOYS FROM SCHOOL ARE WORKING ON FARMS DURING THE HOLIDAYS, MOTHER! FOR DEFENSE, YOU KNOW!
THE POOR BOY MUST BE FRIGHTFULLY LONELY. WHAT'S THIS? WHY OF

"Welcome Soldiers" opens with the tidbit that schoolboys worked on farms during the holidays due to the many workers that had enlisted. Archie was one of those schoolboys, and, in fact, his absence is the catalyst for the story: he's sent letters to both Betty and Veronica exclaiming how much fun he's had learning new dance steps from the farm girls!

The girls decide it's their turn to do something for defense—namely, hold a dance of their own and invite local servicemen. They even enlist "Danny Woodwin's Big Band" to play at the dance (a nod to 1940s bandleader Benny Goodman and an early example of Archie writers using satirical names in place of real ones). Problem is, sudden orders force the servicemen to cancel so all that's left are Betty, Veronica, their girlfriends and lots of Women's Army Corps (WACS)! The dance seems like a washout—until Archie and his friends get back to town and save the day! Other direct war references in the story include a poster that reads, "'Tis Better to Give to the USO"



and a final shot of Betty and Veronica being rejected at the WACS recruiting office for being too young.

The spirit of volunteerism that was such a big part of World War II provides the spark for "Glamour In White."

"It's a highly commendable thing you are doing, Miss Lodge. With the war going on, the Lord knows we can use every volunteer," says the head nurse.

"Yes'm, I'm glad to be able to help the war effort," replies Veronica.

Of course, Veronica's also motivated by her desire to impress Archie, so Betty volunteers too: "I'm only too anxious to do my part," she exclaims.

The shine is quickly off the rose for both girls when they realize being nurses isn't as glamorous as they thought—certainly not with all those mops and brooms involved! Betty and Veronica prove a match for Archie in the slapstick department in this story, and when Archie himself shows up as a patient, the catfight escalates to hilarious comedic heights!

Archie #3 brought us the WACS, but *Archie* #6 (Jan/Feb 1944) brings us…the WAGS! Back in the 1940s, the Andrews family actually had a dog named Oscar, who made sporadic appearances in short stories like this four-pager. "Oscar Joins the Wags" is probably the most notable of all. After Oscar causes trouble at the doctor's office, Archie spots a poster reading, "Lend Your Dog To The Wags." Archie decides to do just that by volunteering Oscar's services to the service! After all, to quote Archie, Oscar is "All-American! And smart, too!"

That makes one of them: it isn't too long before Archie gets a call from the Captain about his troublesome dog! The reason? Turns out Oscar is a she, not a he! The army gladly returns mother and pups, but after checking out the litter Archie proclaims, "You did your duty after all, Oscar! All your pups are males! And we'll make every one of 'em a WAG!"

Archie's Pal
Jughead
comics
10¢
PARDON ME MISS--- TODAY IS MY PAL ARCHIE'S BIRTHDAY / COULD I GIVE HIM YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER AS A GIFT?

It seems like Jughead just couldn't get a break in these wartime stories. When he wasn't causing a furor while disguised as the fuehrer, he was causing a riot while disguised as a Hollywood starlet! Such was the case in "The Big Shot" (*Archie Comics* #6, Jan/Feb 1944). The frivolity begins when Archie invites luscious Lana Lamarr to his bond rally. Really, Archie—you think you can just invite a big Hollywood star just like that?! Well, he does. He drops her a note and the next thing you know he gets a confirmation in the mail! But when he goes to see her he catches her off guard—it seems he signed his letter "A. Andrews," the same way her agent signs it! Realizing the error, Miss Lamarr is too upset to proceed. That doesn't stop Archie, of course—he borrows one of Veronica's dresses from Mrs. Lodge, slaps it on Jughead and tells the audience Lana Lamarr has laryngitis! (A note about the 1940s incarnation of Jughead for the uninitiated: he is hideous. He could scare every Nazi, prison inmate and Universal Studios movie monster combined! And now he's wearing a wig and a dress)!

Just as Reggie is about to clobber Archie for the charade, who should show up but that luminescent star of stage and screen herself, Miss Lamarr? Seems the temperamental starlet had a change of heart:

WHO'S WHO IN RIVERDALE!
Meet...
MR. AND MRS. ANDREWS ····· WHEN THEY WERE FIRST MARRIED THEY SETTLED DOWN TO A LIFE OF WEDDED BLISS AND PEACE ····· THEN ARCHIE WAS BORN!
ARCHIE ANDREWS ··· ALL AROUND ATHLETE, HONOR STUDENT, BEST-DRESSED MAN, RUG CUTTER EXTRAORDINARY, AND MAN ABOUT TOWN ·ACCORDING TO RIVERDALE HIGH SCHOOL PAPER, THE BROWN AND GOLD
VIVACIOUS VERONICA LODGE··· THAT GLAMOROUS SUB-DEB WHO'S HEP TO ALL THE ANGLES. SHE THINKS ARCHIE IS A PUSHOVER ···· BUT HASN'T DECIDED WHICH CLIFF!
SWEET BETTY COOPER··SHE JUST ADORES TYRONE POWER AND ARCHIE ANDREWS··· CAN'T MAKE UP HER MIND WHETHER TO GO AFTER THE ONE THAT'S HANDSOME AND SHE'LL NEVER GET, OR THE ONE SHE CAN GET. THAT'S ARCHIE!
JUGHEAD IS ARCHIE'S PAL (ESPECIALLY WHEN HE HAS A QUARTER.) "JUG" HATES DAMES ···· THEY KEEP HIM AWAKE!
NOT TO MENTION····
BROWN & GOLD
OFFICERS
EDITOR- ARCHIE ANDREWS
ASST EDTOR ARCHIE ANDREWS
PUBLISHER- ARCHIE ANDREWS
PRINTED BY- ARCHIE ANDREWS
DISTRIBUTOR- JUGHEAD!
MR WEATHERBEE
and
MISS GRUNDY
OF DEAR OLD R.H.S.!
Sincerely, Mortimer

"Forgive me for acting so snobbish before, Archie! I was so upset you know! Nobody's too big to work for such a cause, you dear, sweet boy."

Needless to say, the males descended upon Miss Lamarr like bees to honey—and countless bonds were sold that day!

A few issues later, in *Archie* #9 (Jul/Aug 1944), Veronica and Betty are learning first aid for the cause. As their instructor says, "Don't forget we're all part of one great effort!"

The girls decide they'll practice on Archie, explaining to him that it's "patriotic," but he's reluctant to be a guinea pig. His reluctance is no match for his klutziness, however and as he plummets down Veronica's staircase it's apparent he's going to get first aid whether he wants it or not! By the end of the story, Archie doesn't need first aid—he needs a hospital!

Meanwhile, back in *Pep Comics* #51 (Dec 1944) the boys of Riverdale High got an opportunity to strut their stuff for Uncle Sam in "Archie the Commando."

"This notice just came in—Riverdale High in conjunction with the war department is sponsoring a commando contest open to all male P.T. students...," reads a Coach Kleets precursor.

Archie is less than enthused—guess he's sick of all the lumps he's taken.

"This is one time I'm not sticking my neck out, Jug. I can't even cross the street without getting into trouble—let alone a commando contest!"

Of course, this is the world of Archie, and as he and Jughead wait on a longer-

than-usual line for lunch it isn't long before they realize they're really on line to sign up for the commando contest—but by then it's too late! (Not realizing you were really in line to sign up for the army or to get rationed items like nylons was a common gag in the 1940's—in fact, it's how Abbott & Costello wound up in the army in *Buck Privates*!)

The contest turns out to be more like sport—for Reggie, that is. He makes great sport of Archie, from tripping him to switching signs on the trail, sabotage is Reggie's middle

2ND EDITION
BIG 116 PAGE BOOK
ALL NEW STORIES
Archie
ANNUAL
YEAR BOOK
DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU SEE ON THIS COVER...THAT'S JUST A LITTLE PIPE DREAM ARCHIE'S HAVING! WAIT'LL YOU SEE WHAT REALLY HAPPENS TO HIM ON THE INSIDE!

name! It leads to one hilarious mishap after another but when all is said and done, it turns out the switched signs fooled Reggie and all the other contestants, too! Miraculously, Archie is a winner...until the guys think *he* switched the signs and lie in wait for him!

A month later, in *Archie* #12 (Jan/Feb 1945) Archie takes his ailing father's place as "The Air Raid Warden." Archie starts things off with a bang by plowing his roadster right into the chief warden's car! From there, it's one slapstick complication after another as Archie "helps" the adult air raid wardens run through their drills. Even banishment to the office doesn't help—when the air raid wardens try to phone town to notify them of a "blackout," Archie ties up the phone lines as he chatters to Veronica!

With no other choice, the chief reluctantly sends Archie back out to cover post 2 during the blackout. This would seem a fine idea—he'd be out of everyone's way—what more damage could he possibly cause? Well, he is mighty enthralled by the "snazzy" flashlight he's been entrusted with! This is an exemplary story that really captures a major facet of the wartime effort, and a nice companion piece to all those Warner Brothers wartime cartoons with characters exclaiming, "turn out that light!"

The next issue, *Archie* #13 (Mar/Apr 1945), shows how

commonplace the "war-at-home" mentality had become after a few years of conflict. "Archie the Cowboy" leads off with a two-page spread of Archie and Jughead lugging a cart full of scrap metal.

"Hurry up, willya?," implores the perspiring Archie to his pal Jughead who lags behind. "You want to win the scrap contest, don't you?"

Now it wasn't just a matter of "doing the right thing." It had become so commonplace that contests were concocted just to make sure no one became too complacent! Archie and Jughead didn't look too happy hauling that heavy load, but they persevered. Of course, it didn't hurt that the grand prize was a trip to a dude ranch, and for the next 12 pages Archie and Jughead got themselves mixed up in entanglements out west. After a nightmare sends the duo on the next rail back to Riverdale, Archie sardonically proclaims "We're coming back earlier because we'd rather collect scrap!"

Archie #14 (May/Jun 1945) uses the home front motif purely as a springboard for slapstick antics. Specifically, two stories arise out of the worker shortage and use World War II jargon at the beginning and end of stories that would otherwise be routine comic shenanigans.

A panel depicting Archie responding to a sign that reads, "Be a Patriot—Work in Floogle's Dept. Store" frames the story, "Archie the Patriot." Despite Jughead's ribbing, Archie insists that he's going do his "patriotic duty" and apply for the job. Jughead counters by telling him he'd make the storeowner "a lot happier by buying war bonds!" It only took four years of co-starring in Archie's misadventures for Jughead to realize Archie spells "trouble!"

After wreaking the expected havoc upon the store, Archie retreats to the sidewalk where Jughead waits to congratulate him. "You held onto this job a half hour longer than usual," Jughead dryly offers.

"Oh, well. I guess I *can* be just as patriotic buyin' war bonds!," Archie concedes.

An untitled Betty and Veronica story from that issue (and one where they're billed in that order) has a similar opening, as the girls gaze upon a sign that proclaims, "Because of the war a shortage of waitresses has resulted in the faculty lunch room. Volunteers are urgently needed! Do your part for victory...students will be given extra credit for this work."

A fair amount of "cat-fighting" ensues as the girls try to score points with Principal Weatherbee. "What patriotic girls," he proclaims—until their competition results in a few unintended injuries for the "Bee." An errant mouse that's escaped from the science class further complicates matters. The frenzy climaxes with Weatherbee knocked flat on his stomach. The faculty members who carry him away (to the school nurse, perhaps?) don't miss an opportunity to compare him to war machines:

"Ugh! What does this B-29 eat to make him so heavy?"

"Oof! The Navy ought to commandeer this carcass for a battleship anchor!"

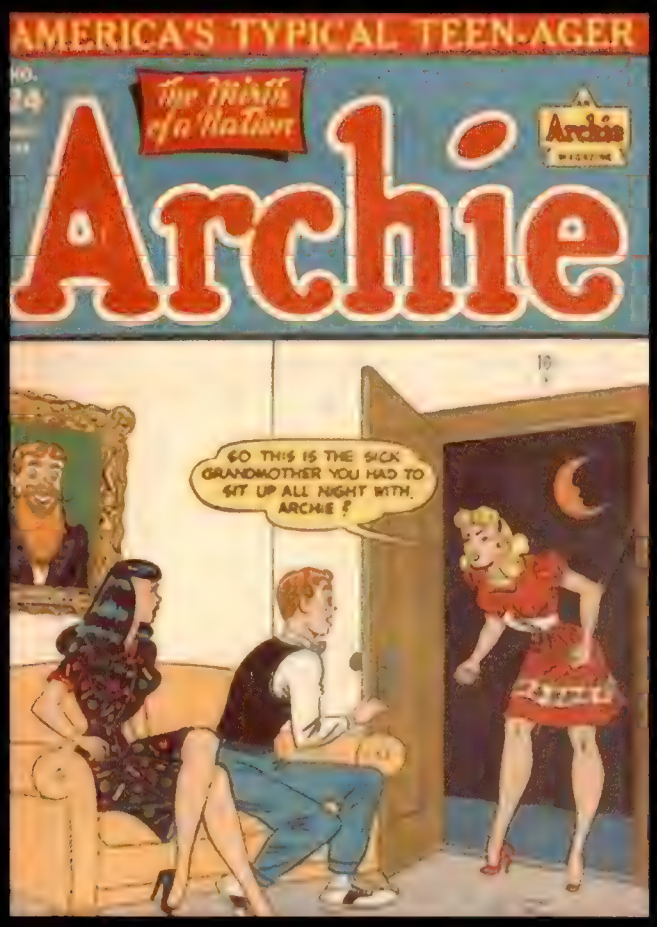
After all this, where could Betty and Veronica possibly end up but in the kitchen washing dishes? "The next time you decide to be patriotic, join the WACS!" yells the cook, who could be mistaken for a battleship herself!

A coda of sorts to the earlier "Air Raid Warden" story appears in *Archie* #15 (Jul/Aug 1945). A three-page "Archie short" finds the goofy teen in the kitchen about to fix himself "a nice big stack of golden brown pancakes!" When the air raid siren blows, Archie frantically races through the house to turn off all the lights, but the light switch in the kitchen won't work. A chorus of voices from who knows where implore him to turn out his lights, culminating in a hulking air raid warden bursting through the front door:

"Say, Listen, are you gonna' put out that light, or do I have to do it for you?" bellows the imposing fellow. Archie then pulls on the cord to turn out the kitchen light, but it breaks! Desperate, he hurls a can of baking soda towards it but misses. Then, he stacks a kettle and a breadbox on a chair so he can reach the light…and inevitably comes crashing to the ground! When Archie's parents return home, they find the inside of their home demolished and Archie's head stuck in a bowl of pancake batter. "…Is the blackout over yet?" asks Archie, giving new meaning to the term, "blackout gag!"

Archie #24 (Jan/Feb 1947) tackled the nylon shortage. In yet another example of one of the most typical gags of the day, Archie and Jughead think they're in line for a movie but they're really in line for nylon stockings! When motor mouth Gabby spots Archie, she thinks he's lying about the movies and really intended to wait for nylons—to give to Veronica for her birthday! She wastes no time in telling Veronica, and once Veronica expects something—well, let's just say it's no easy task for Archie to come up with the nylons in the midst of a shortage! Archie meets with one riotous calamity after another as he pursues the elusive quarry. Lying to Betty that he needs a spare pair for his Mom results in the worst disaster yet as Gabby fills Betty in on the real deal. In the end, all the ladies in Archie's life realize it's all been a misunderstanding—and inundate him with more nylons than he can use! The last shot shows Archie at a Marine recruiting desk:

"So ya wanta' get away from women! But you're still too young to join!" the recruiting sergeant sternly proclaims, bringing one of Archie's last World War II tales to a close, just as our boys started returning home from the war in real life.


AMERICA'S TYPICAL TEEN-AGER
the Width of a Nation
Archie
Archie
SO THIS IS THE SICK GRANDMOTHER YOU HAD TO SIT UP ALL NIGHT WITH, ARCHIE?

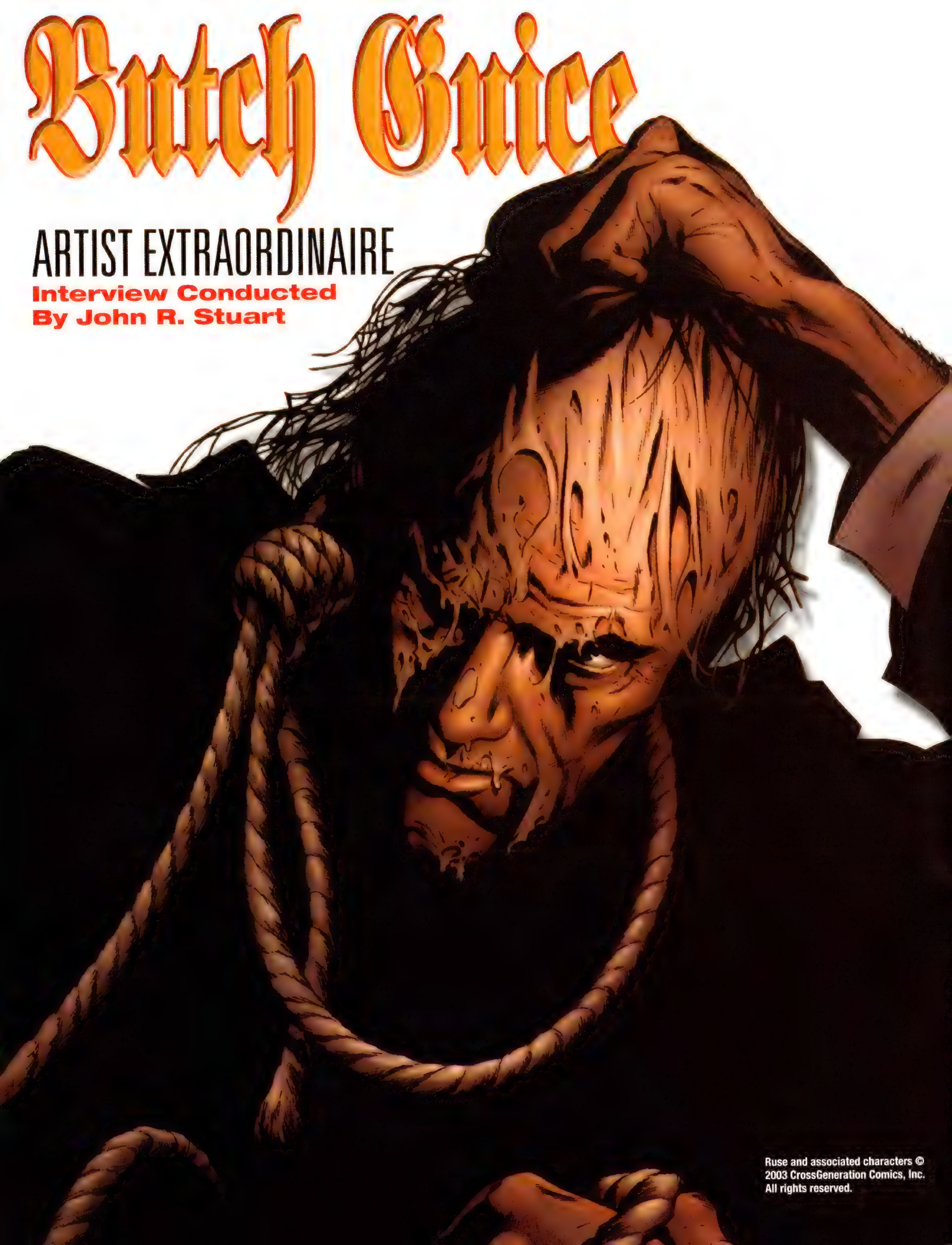
Archie's ineligibility was lucky for comic book fans everywhere, because if Archie had actually enlisted, he never would have starred in all these wonderful home front misadventures!

Paul Castiglia is a freelance writer, editor and archivist for Archie Comic Publications. Among the trade paperback collections he has researched and edited include the World War II era Archie Americana Series Best of the Forties *and* Best of the Forties Book 2 *and* The Shield: America's 1st Patriotic Comic Book Hero.

Butch Guice

ARTIST EXTRAORDINAIRE

Interview Conducted By John R. Stuart



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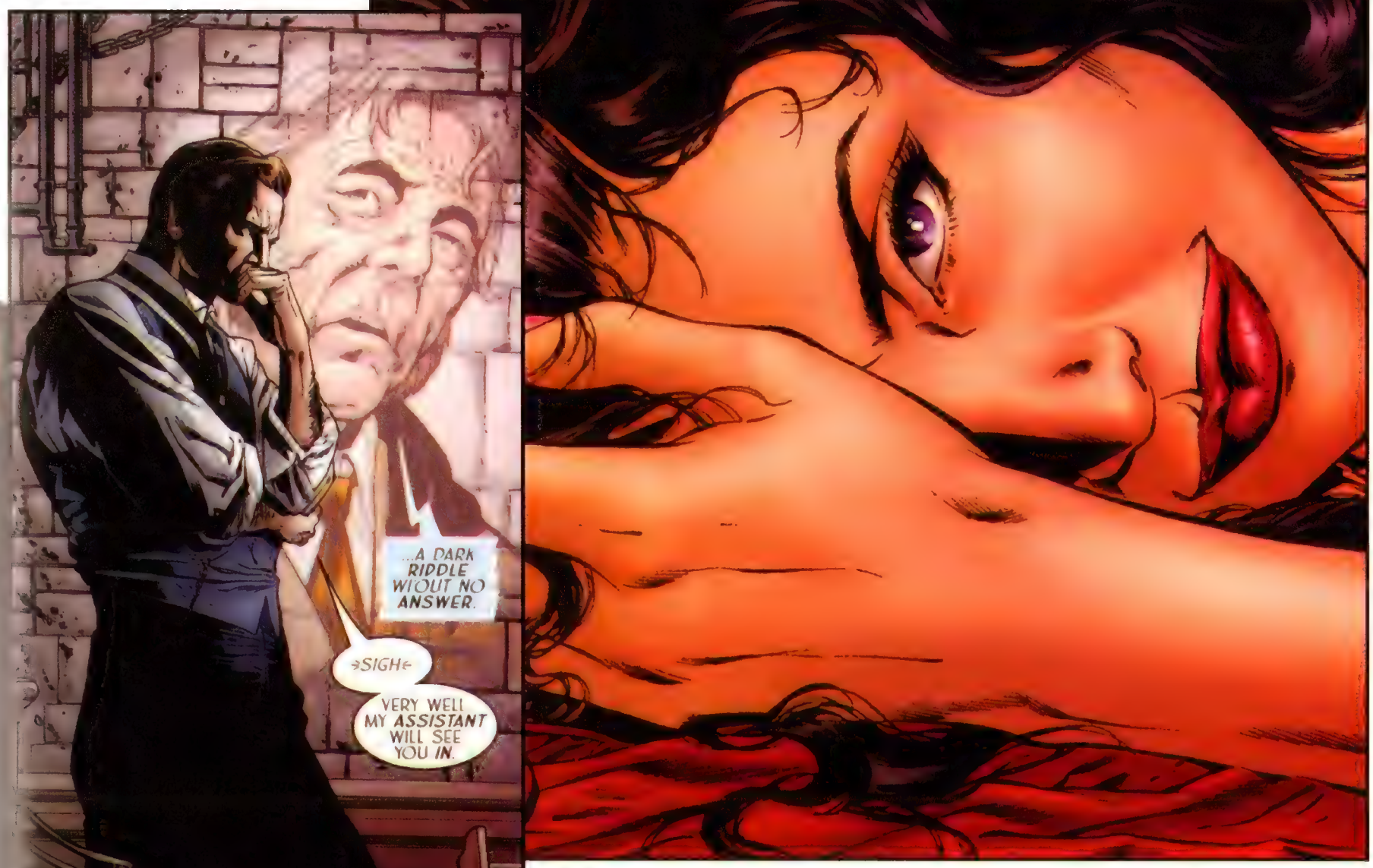


"Introducing the Astonishing Artistry of Butch Guice"

This is how Al Milgrom introduced Butch Guice in *Micronauts* #48 in the fall of 1981. Butch has been producing his own special brand of comics magic for nearly 22 years now, and his work on *Ruse* generated an Eisner nomination in 2002. Working for Marvel, DC and nearly every other comics company, Butch has drawn everything from Superman to the Little Mermaid.

He continues to astonish us with his art and it sounds as if he's having a blast doing so!

So, let me introduce you to one of the coolest, most interesting, articulate and eloquent artists in the business.

EARLY DAYS

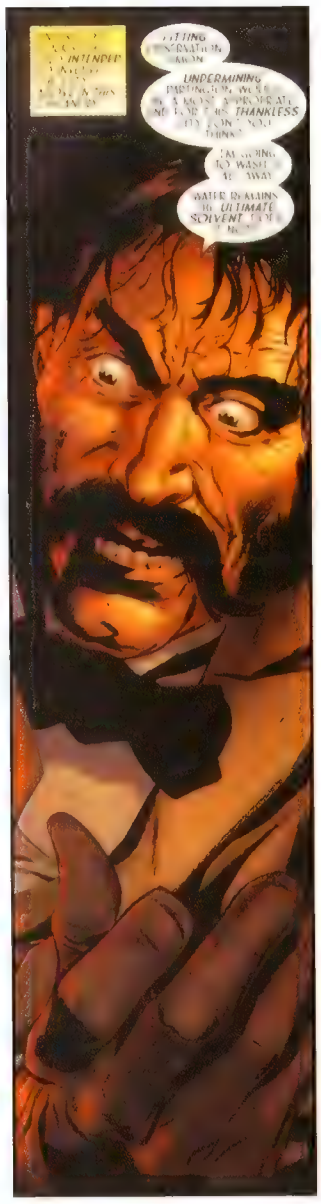
CBM: Butch, can you tell me about your early life, place and date of birth, etc.?

Guice: Let's see...I was born in 1961 and grew up outside of Chattanooga, Tennessee. We tended to live in more rural areas, which meant as a kid having plenty of horses, chickens, livestock, etc., around as part of my everyday life. Endless amounts of time spent in whatever local woods could be found nearby—hunting, fishing, climbing, exploring, coupled with the usual assortment of odd activities a young boy somehow finds through no real planning on his part. It was pretty "Disneyesque" overall, with a large dose of Tom Sawyer, at least in my case, thrown in for good measure. Lots of good memories.

CBM: Can you remember what your introduction to comic books was?

Guice: A neighborhood friend brought a stack of comics over, an entire cardboard box full, and in the course of play ended up leaving them on the front porch. I was ten or eleven years old at the time. My mom insisted I bring them inside for safekeeping. I took the box to my room and spent the night reading them under the covers of my bed.

Stan Lee's *Spider-Man*, Jack Kirby's *Thor*, Neal Adams' *Batman*—comic books were a treasure trove for a kid like myself with a hyperactive sense of romantic adventure. I was totally captivated.



CBM: Were you a Marvel or a DC fan, or did you just love all comics?

Guice: I loved all of them. Any comic I could get my hands on. I was (and still am) fascinated by the combination of the words and illustrations, working together, to tell the story.

CBM: Any special favorite series, you know that one or two books that you just couldn't wait to arrive on the racks.

Guice: It changed pretty regularly with each new discovery. *Spider-Man*, *Batman* and *Daredevil* were always favorites. I was a huge fan of the DC war books—*Sgt. Rock*, *The Losers*, *Haunted Tank*, *Enemy Ace*, *Dr. Strange*, *Killraven*, *Black Panther* (the "Panther's Rage" storyline), *Kamandi*, the Goodwin/Simonson *Manhunter* tales, *Conan*, and many more I'm forgetting off the top of my head. All had terrific runs, which I followed enthusiastically. As I grew older, my interests expanded beyond Marvel and DC into things like *Nexus* and *Mage*, as well as the work of the great strip artists—Caniff, Crane, Raymond, Foster, Sickles, Starr, Kotzky, Robbins and many more.

CBM: Were you an artist at an early age?

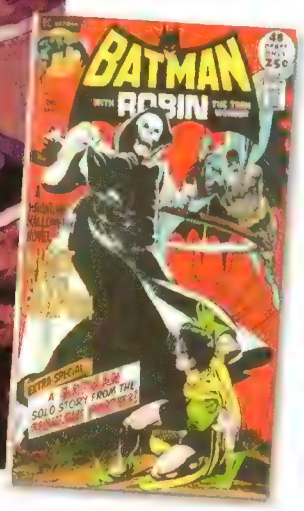
Guice: I drew, but I don't recall anything very specific or focused in my efforts, mostly school art assignments, things like that. I guess I had a bit of a hand for it. I remember winning a ribbon for an art contest in second grade for a large drawing of roses I begrudgingly drew for lack of a better idea. Drawing was very secondary at that point in my life, however, to climbing trees, running roughshod through the woods all summer long, and whatever general mischief was to be had. It was far more exciting to steal vegetables from your neighbor's garden for a tree house feast, or attempt to build a hang glider out of tent poles, old sheets and twine, than to sit with pencil and paper for any length of time.

CBM: At what point did you realize that you wanted to be a comic book artist?

Guice: Really, it was that first night of discovery with the box of comics. Drawing and writing comics replaced all my previous occupational daydreams of being a dashing explorer/archaeologist, Indian Scout, hardboiled detective, or fighter pilot.

CBM: It sounds as if your boyhood days were quite idyllic. Did your parents support your early artistic endeavors? Were your parents artistically inclined?

Guice: Neither of my parents is artistically inclined, but they have provided me great support with my efforts over the years. I'm not sure if they actually understood how I intended to make a living drawing comic books in the beginning, but they never discouraged me from following my dream. It is a lesson I'm trying to remember with my own daughter's interests now.



CBM: I know a lot of the early comic book artists got into the profession by accident, and often didn't really see it as a respectable career, but most of the

latter artists such as Neal Adams always aspired to the business. The latter artists knew this was a creative profession and worked hard to get into the business. Does this describe your early longing to be a comic book artist?

Guice: I think my earliest desire was based far more on the sheer fun and excitement drawing comics presented me. It never really entered into my head whether it was a respectable profession or not. I guess I should be thankful the concept of robbing banks didn't fire my imagination in the same way. Otherwise, I'm quite sure I would have pursued a life of crime with just as much blind enthusiasm, if it had.

By the time I was actually working full time in the field, Neal and his generation of creators had pretty much shattered the old perceptions about job respectability.

CBM: Once the decision was made to be a comic book artist, did you imitate specific artists? Did you draw and write your own amateur comics?

Guice: I had an entire "line" of comics at one time, all hand drawn, lettered, and colored on typing paper, complete with crossover storylines and, by my youthful perception, world shattering events. I drew probably thirty or forty issues of the things between the ages of eleven and fourteen.

CBM: In those days were there any particular artists that you were inspired by?

Guice: Everyone. Some more so than others, but I was an artistic sponge at that time, desperately trying to figure out storytelling, anatomy, story structure, dynamics, lighting, etc., all at once, and without a clue as to how. Joe Kubert was a huge influence on me in the very beginning. He has a very instinctual drawing approach—a raw, from the gut type of art. Other influences were gentlemen like Gene Colan, Russ Heath, John Romita, Sr., Neal Adams, John Buscema, Gil Kane, John Severin and Frank Thorne.

Later came the "strip guys," with their glorious black and white placement, artists such as Milton Caniff, Noel Sickles, Alex Toth, Frank Robbins, Alex Raymond, Roy Crane and Alex Kotzky.

Now I tend to spend most of my time trying to absorb the composition lessons of the illustrative giants—people such as Dean Cornwell, Howard Pyle, Robert

Fawcett, NC Wyeth, Mead Schaeffer, Austin Briggs, Noel Sickles (again), Al Parker and Andrew Loomis.

CBM: Did you collect anything other than comic books?

Guice: Not really. I couldn't afford much else, even at those long ago bargain prices of the twenty-cent comic book. All my available spending money as a kid was pretty much tied up in my mad acquisition of monthly comics. Every Friday's allowance meant four to five comics and a Baby Ruth candy bar at that age. Skip the candy bar if it was a good week for comic books.

CBM: Are you a movie or TV buff, any special favorites?

Guice: I tend to enjoy the older black and white movies of the thirties and forties—The Thin Man series with William Powell and Myrna Loy (actually, just about anything with Powell and/or Loy), the "Road Pictures" with Hope, Crosby and Lamour, Greer Garson in her prime, Hepburn and Tracy, Cary Grant—that sort of thing.

CBM: Did you study art in university or college, or are you self-taught?

Guice: Pretty much self-taught. I attended college for one semester but dropped out in frustration. I wanted to draw—be taught new approaches, techniques, be exposed to new inspirations. I was far too impatient at the time for what I perceived as the slow pace of college curriculum.

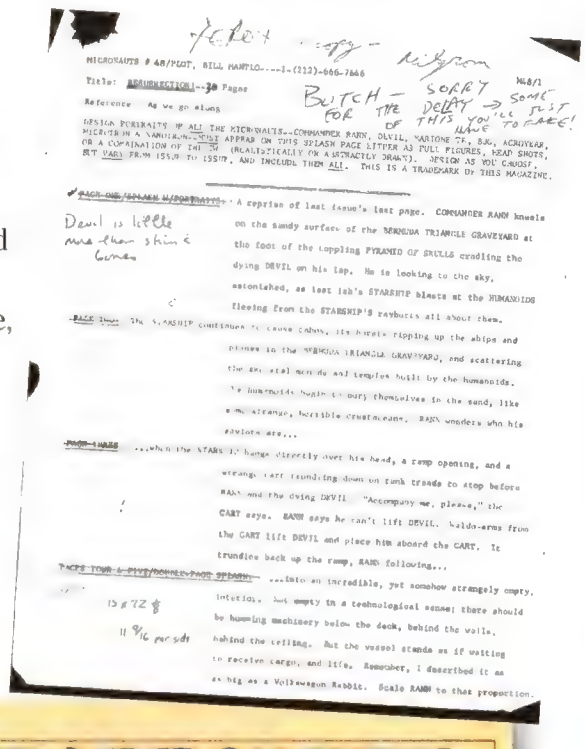
BREAKING INTO THE BUSINESS AT MARVEL

CBM: Your first big break was with Marvel in 1983. Can you describe how you broke into the business?

Guice: I had been popping up hit-and-miss in various, mostly non-mainstream, projects for a year or two in the early '80s. Really, it was whatever work I could scrounge up, or get some excessively generous person or the other to consent to allow me to "destroy" with my enthusiastic inexperience. I had "ghosted" a chapter in the *Rom Annual* #1 for Pat Broderick the year prior (a really embarrassing piece of work on my part and full of rookie mistakes, but it was printed, nonetheless). With Gil Kane's departure from *Micronauts*, it was decided to "test" several pencilers with individual issues of the book, the idea being whomever did the best job would be assigned the title on a regular basis.

By this time, I was working a regular 9-5 job designing patches and emblems for a major supplier in that market. It was mind-numbing work, but at least it was art.

Anyway, I came home one evening and had a message from Allen Milgrom asking if I would be interested in drawing an issue of *Micronauts* (#48). It seems Bill Mantlo, who wrote the *Rom Annual* as well, had remembered my work and had offered up my name as a possibility. Of course, I accepted the assignment as quickly as possible before anyone actually went back and took a serious look at that *Rom* job, and then


MICRONAUTS # 48/PLOT, BILL MANTLO----1-(212)-666-7866

Title: RESURRECTION!--30 Pages

Reference As we go along

DESIGN PORTRAITS OF ALL THE MICRONAUTS...COMMANDER RANN, DEVIL, MARIONETTE JR., BUG, ACROYEAR, MICRO-MAN IN A VARIETY...MIGHT APPEAR ON THIS SPLASH PAGE EITHER AS FULL FIGURES, HEAD SHOTS, OR A COMBINATION OF THE TWO. (REALISTICALLY OR A SECRACTLY DRAWN). DESIGN AS YOU CHOOSE, BUT VARY FROM 15% TO 135%, AND INCLUDE THEM ALL. THIS IS A TRADEMARK OF THIS MAGAZINE.

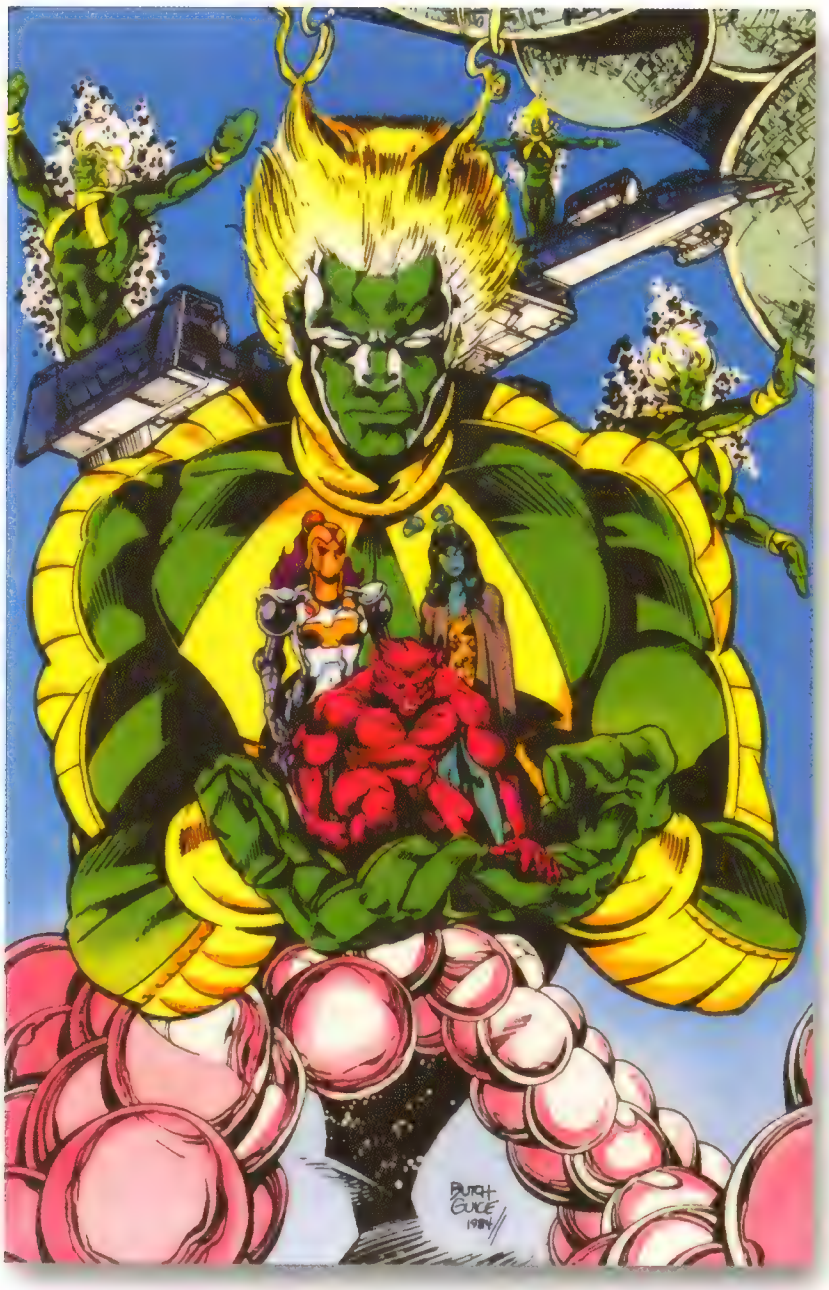
PAGE ONE/SPLASH W/PORTRAITS: A reprise of last issue's last page. COMMANDER RANN kneels on the sandy surface of the BERMUDA TRIANGLE GRAVEYARD at the foot of the toppling PYRAMID OF SKULLS cradling the dying DEVIL on his lap. He is looking to the sky, astonished, as last ish's STARSHIP blasts at the HUMANOIDS fleeing from the STARSHIP'S ravages all about them.

PAGE TWO: The STARSHIP continues to cause chaos, its bursts ripping up the ships and planes in the BERMUDA TRIANGLE GRAVEYARD, and scattering the skeletal remains and temples built by the humanoids. The humanoids begin to bury themselves in the sand, like some strange, horrible crustaceans. RANN wonders who his saviors are...

PAGE THREE: ...when the STARS in homage directly over his head, a ramp opening, and a strange, cart rumbling down on tank treads to stop before RANN and the dying DEVIL. "Accompany me, please," the CART says. RANN says he can't lift DEVIL. Waldo-arms from the CART lift DEVIL and place him aboard the CART. It trundles back up the ramp, RANN following...

PAGES FOUR & FIVE/DOUBLE-PAGE SPREAD: ...into an incredible, yet somehow strangely empty, interior. Not empty in a technological sense; there should be humming machinery below the deck, behind the walls, behind the ceiling. But the vessel stands as if waiting to receive cargo, and life. Remember, I described it as as big as a Volkswagon Rabbit. Scale RANN to that proportion.

Stan Lee PRESENTS:
THE MICRONAUTS!
RESURRECTION!
CHAPTER I
VREET
I MUST BE SEEING THAT SELF-SAME STARSHIP THAT ARE BEING SAVED FROM THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE!
MARIONETTE BUG DEVIL
IT'S A STARSHIP FASHIONED IN THE IMAGE OF MY DEAD ROBOTIC COMPANION BIOTRON!
NANOTRON MICROTRON COMMANDER RANN ACROYEAR
BILL MANTLO / AUTHOR
DANNY BULANADI / EMBELLISHER
JIM NOVAK / LETTERER
BOB SHAREN / COLORIST
AL MILGROM / EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
AND INTRODUCING THE ASTOUNDING ARTISTRY OF BUTCH GUICE, PENCILER



proceeded to go out and break my drawing arm in a fall two nights later.

So it turned out my first credited solo work for a major company was produced around a regular forty hour a week job, with a broken drawing arm thrown in, just to make sure I had an interesting tale to relate twenty years later.

That first issue of *Micronauts* led to another, and then a third, by which time I finally quit the emblem design job, and have been working steady in comics now for twenty years.

I never did hear who else might have been considered for the *Micronauts* assignment—I'm not even sure if Bill and Al had gotten that far with their thinking. I'm just thankful to both that they gave me the shot despite my inexperience and artistic shortcomings.

CBM: In the early days was it a struggle to meet the deadlines? Did you find that you were compromising on the art to meet the monthly deadline?

Guice: Deadlines were certainly a battle to be fought. *Micronauts*, by that time, was one of the first direct market books; a real experiment to see if this funny idea about "comic shops" was actually going to work. As a result, it was 32 pages each issue instead of 22, with the occasional 48-page special thrown in just to attract attention. I don't know if I can actually say I "compromised" my art to meet those deadlines, however, to be really honest, I wasn't a good enough illustrator to have enough artistic elbow room for any major shortcuts. I just worked as hard and as fast as I could, all the while trying to learn more about actual storytelling theory. Both Al and Bill were very generous with insight and advice on what was working, what I needed to pay more attention to the next issue, etc. That first year was a blur of pages and a building of understanding—and fun. It was all filled with tremendous fun. I was finally doing professionally what I had been dreaming about since I was eleven.

CBM: Do you have a set working routine?

Guice: I do now, even before joining CrossGen, but not nearly so much in the early years. At the time, it seemed I worked around the clock (and I'm sure I boasted much the same), but in retrospect, it more than likely consisted of shifts of three to four hours drawing broken up with distractions of equal amounts of time. It wasn't until I was married and we had a baby on the way that I settled down into a normal 40-50 hour, 9-5 type of workweek. New brides tend to enjoy little things like regular paychecks, whereas freelancing single guys tend to be less bothered by the prospect of eating peanut butter for a week because you didn't actually draw the previous one. Happy wife can be a wonderful motivator to the average artist.

CBM: Many new artists are asked to draw in the same style as an already established "Big Name Artist," for example Jack Kirby. Was there any of this pressure at Marvel?

Guice: That may have been true with some others, but I can't recall anyone from that time ever directing me to draw in a particular style. In my memory, if there was direction from someone at Marvel, it always related to storytelling. Jack Kirby's name was mentioned often, but it always came with a lesson on how Jack had told the story for maximum effect, not directions on how to draw "like Jack."

CBM: Was the famous "Marvel Bullpen" gone by the time you arrived at Marvel?

Guice: Long gone, or at least, gone in as much as it never actually existed. However, Marvel was still a very fun and exciting place to be working at the time. The company was in a transition, having come out of the topsy-turvy oddball artistic titles and characters of the '70s (which I grew up on and still look back on fondly), and seemed to be trying to rebuild itself, recreate the growth and continu-

ity of Marvel of the '60s. The direct market was being cobbled together piece-by-piece around us daily and everyone had their fingers crossed it would actually work. Conventions were beginning to become regional, standard affairs, instead of something which happened only occasionally in New York City.

It all seemed very new and exciting for comics in many ways.

CBM: Your first major work was the 11-issue run on *Micronauts*. Can you tell us what that first experience was like?

Guice: It was a great time. What professional couldn't look back at their initial rookie years in comics and not find joy? To actually be doing daily what you had dreamed about doing since you were a kid is a thrill. Yes, there are the bruising business realities, which you never considered as a child, but it's still your chance to live a dream you've harbored for years. It's a shame so few people ever get to have that kind of opportunity in life offered up to them—and a greater shame when those who do, forget the blessing that it is.

CBM: Looking at your early *Micronauts* art I seem to see a Jim Steranko influence, or is it just my imagination?

Guice: I wouldn't say it's not there, but I can't recall any real effort on my part at that time to lead the look of the art in that direction.

CBM: Of all the work you did at Marvel, do you have a favorite issue or run? Something that truly defines your Marvel work.

Guice: It's been years, so my memory is certainly rusty in regard to specific issues. When I think back on my time at Marvel I tend to remember periods like *Swords of the Swashbucklers* (and my friendships with Bill Mantlo and Archie Goodwin), *Dr. Strange* (with Roy Thomas and Ralph Macchio), and Mike Carlin, who I've enjoyed working with on every project we've ever been involved with together.

CBM: You specifically mention Archie Goodwin. He is one of the most respected people within the industry, a true giant! Do you have any anecdotes concerning Archie that you can share?

Guice: Not a specific one off the top of my head. Archie was just simply a great guy to work with on any sort of basis. Besides being a wonderful writer, he was a terrific editor and friend. You always wanted to do your best with Archie—not let him down—because you knew he was your most active cheerleader. He could be firm when needed, but there was so much respect for the man, you ended up being far harsher on yourself for your mistakes than Archie ever was with you in the beginning. Archie was a class act, in every aspect.

If I had to cite one important lesson I learned from him, it was to appreciate the time I have in this industry and hang on tightly to the childhood thrill, which led me here in the first place.

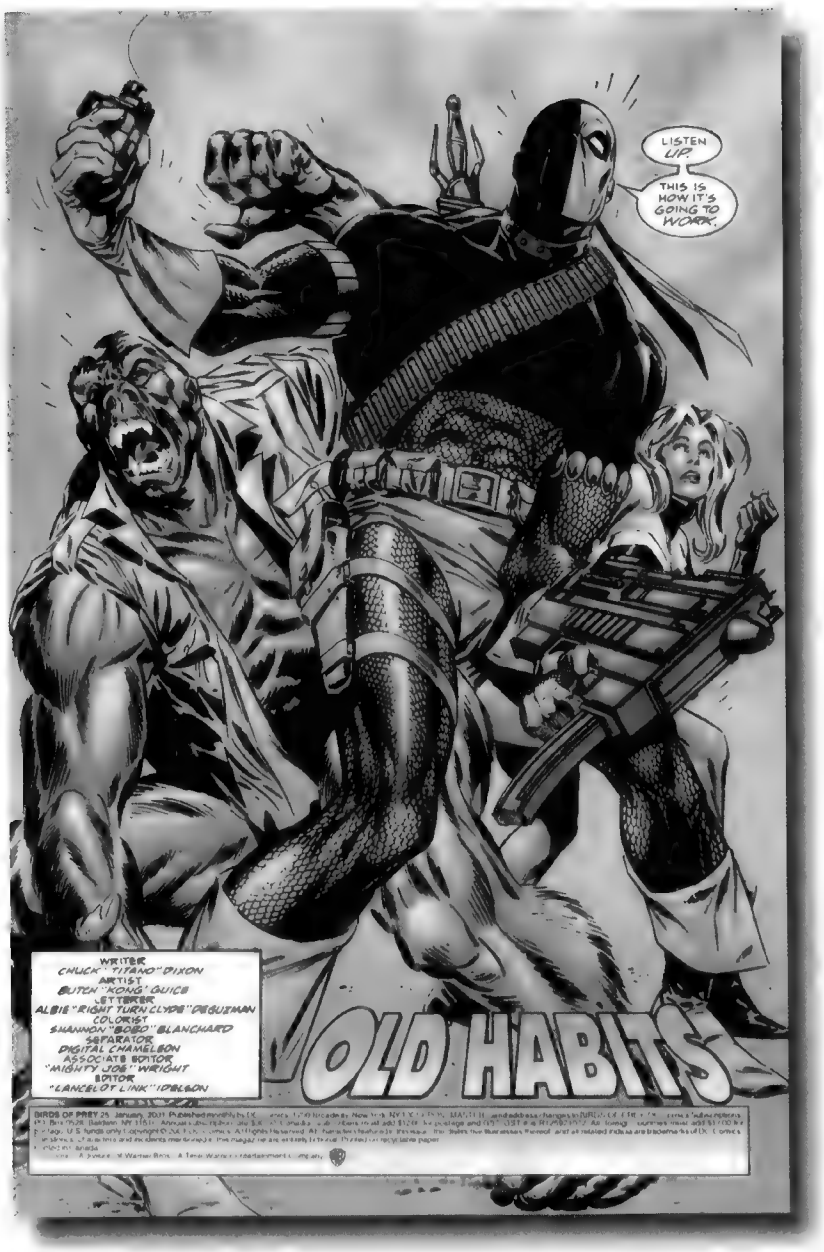
CBM: Jim Shooter was the Editor-in-Chief of Marvel during your period there. Did you have much involvement with Jim?

Guice: I knew Jim more socially than some. I wasn't living in New York during my Marvel days, but I would travel up for regular visits. Jim was always a part of that visit.

CBM: Most artists that worked with Jim Shooter either loved him or thought of him as a pariah. What is your take on Jim?

Guice: I didn't actually work with Jim on a specific project that I recall, other than him being the Editor-in-Chief at the time. Jim always had very specific thoughts on what he wanted to see on the page from his pencilers. Often his general storytelling point was correct, but there was room for discussion and compromise on how to achieve it. But it

THAT LINK WAS THE FIRST MANIFESTATION OF THE LATENT MENTAL POWERS POSSESSED BY ARCTURUS RANN THAT WOULD, UPON BEING TOUCHED BY THE ENIGMA FORCE, CREATE THE ETHEREAL ENTITIES KNOWN ONLY AS THE TIME TRAVELLERS!
1000 YEARS LATER RANN RETURNED TO HOMEWORLD TO FIND HIS FORMER TUTOR IN POWER
TO COMBAT BARON KARZA, RANN FORGED A TEAM OF CHAMPIONS SINCE COME TO BE KNOWN AS... MICRONAUTS!
THEY DEFEATED KARZA... TWICE... AND NOW WAGE WAR AGAINST HIS SUCCESSOR--A FORMER ALLY, FORCE COMMANDER!



did seem that he grew more inflexible over time in his ability to accept viewpoints other than his own.

CBM: In 1987, you were working for both Marvel and DC. Were you starting to feel the need to work on books that were more important or were you just seeing what things were like at DC?

Guice: As I recall, I was just following my nose from one job to the next at the time, no other additional motive. I tended to think, at least early in my career, of comics much less in terms of competing companies, and much more as one big toy chest in which I wanted to play with everything eventually.

CBM: Looking at the bulk of your art, it appears as if you inked easily 50% of your own pages. Does this mean you feel your own inks best reflect the creativity of your pencils or was it a question of time and logistics?

Guice: I enjoyed it...and I was fast enough to do it on a monthly basis. The general fan response always seemed to be in favor of me inking myself, so I thought, why not? It also gave me a second pass at fixing things in the pencils before they saw print.

CBM: At Marvel did you like the inks of anyone in particular?

Guice: You know, I barely remember most of those jobs now. Joe Rubinstein and Bob Layton both did nice interior work over my pencils. I recall a couple of covers inked by Jerry Ordway and Tom Palmer, which I really enjoyed. I'm sure there are others I'm forgetting, as well.

CBM: Do you prefer to work on the spandex super hero genres or the more reality-based comics?

Guice: Far and away, the non-super hero material is much more interesting to me. I miss the old western and war comics, which are no longer being published. I'm a huge fan of the pulp and mystery genres. I'd have a grand old time drawing a well-written romance book. Give me costumed period pieces like Zorro, or The Shadow, or Doc Savage, or Captain Blood any day of the week.

CBM: You worked on a variety of books at Marvel, from books such as *Micronauts* and *Indiana Jones* to *Iron Man*—did this diverse workload help you to hone and develop your drawing skills?

Guice: I think it probably has more to do with the sheer repetitive volume of the work than the diversity. There are plenty of valuable lessons to be learned with every page you do.

CBM: Did you have a mentor, someone who guided and advised you during those early days at Marvel?

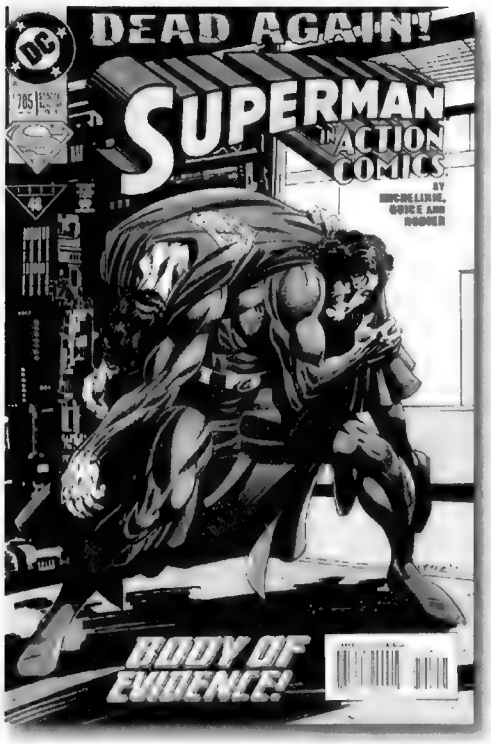
Guice: Too many to list, for fear of forgetting someone.

CBM: Do you prefer to work on covers, interior pages, or the complete package?

Guice: I prefer interior pages—panel sequences—to drawing splash pages or covers. I'm far more excited with the whys and hows of what needs to go into a panel and how best to move the story forward with the next panel, than I am in artistically capturing one singular frozen end-all image. Covers frustrate me on a personal level as a result. One of the things I hope to learn by studying the works of illustrators such as a Bob Fawcett or a Dean Cornwell is how to be a better cover artist, how to get "the story" back into my single image work.

CBM: While at Marvel, did you ever ask for an assignment on one of the Tier 1 books such as *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Fantastic Four* or perhaps *Conan*? I believe you would have done amazing work on a book like *Conan*.

Guice: *Conan* would have been great fun, but no, I worked on whatever book I was offered by the company,



and far too happy to be drawing comics to resent it. I may have hinted once or twice how much I might enjoy a shot at something like Spider-Man or Conan, but the offer was never made.

DC DAYS

CBM: In 1992 after a ten-year stay you moved from Marvel to DC. What was the rationale for the change? Was it the offer of working on a Tier 1 book like *Action Comics* that inspired the shift to DC?

Guice: Marvel and I had a major falling out over *The Prisoner of Love/Beast* 48-page special. There were changes made in how royalties were to be determined on the project, after the fact; the end result of it all being I quit everything I was doing for the company in mid-artistic stride, including refusing to draw the remaining three pages of a six-page *Captain America Annual* prologue chapter.

I did several short Little Mermaid stories for Disney Comics, and called the good folks at DC to see if they would be interested in having me do any work. Mike Carlin called and offered *Action Comics*, which Bob McLeod was leaving as penciler. How could I refuse?

CBM: Was drawing Superman in *Action Comics* a dream come true?

Guice: More like a splash of cold reality. I suddenly realized in all my days of drawing comics, both as a kid and as a professional, I couldn't recall ever having drawn the character of Superman. It took me months trying to get some handle on how to draw him correctly. If he hadn't died and then been brought back with long hair, I doubt I would ever have figured the character out visually.

CBM: The major differences I see in your *Action* work is that the inking chores were handled by Denis Rodier. Did you like Denis' style of inking or would you have preferred to do it yourself?

Guice: Denis and I, for all our efforts, never seemed to artistically mesh (at least to my satisfaction). However, given the trouble I was having drawing the star of the book, I can't say I would have been any happier if I had inked the book myself.

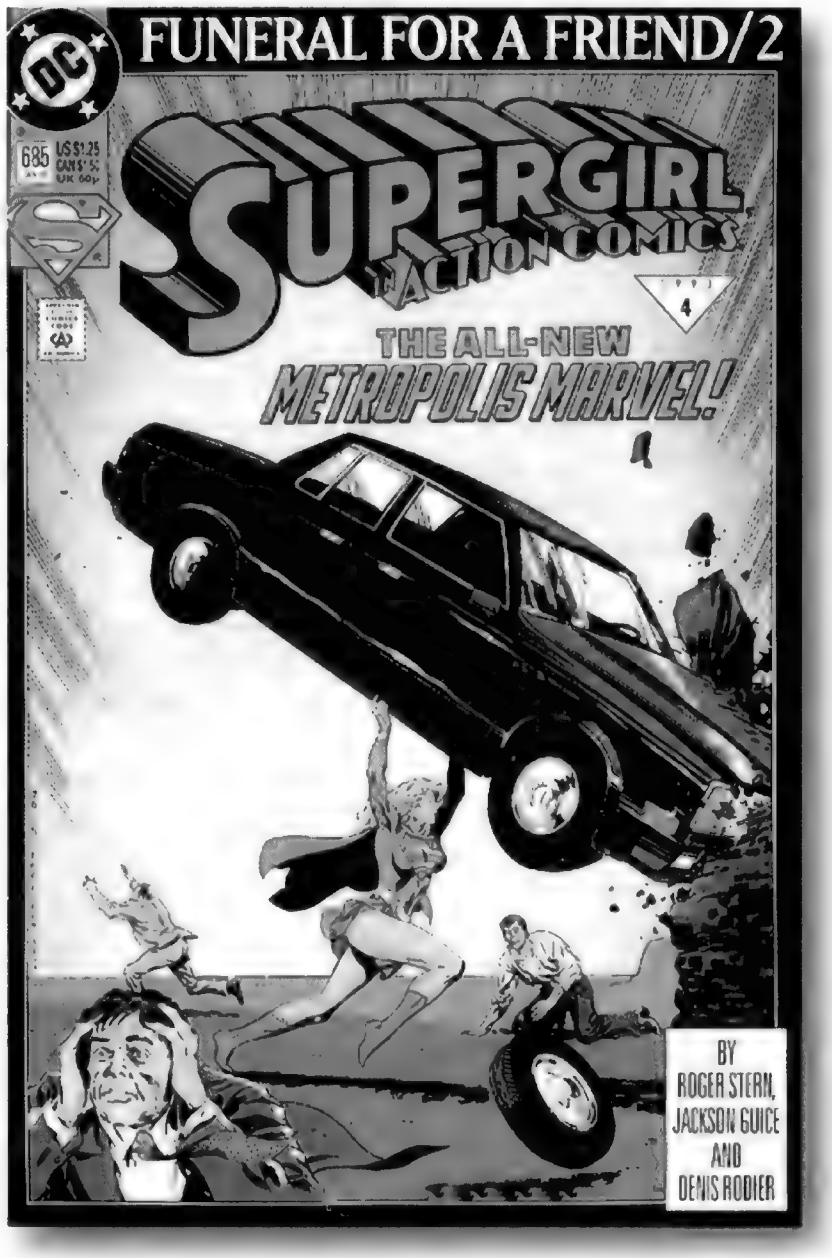
CBM: What was working at DC like in comparison to your stint at Marvel?

Guice: DC is terrific! I have nothing but good things to say about my entire time with the company. They treated me extremely well over the years, and leaving them to join CrossGen in Tampa, after such a long and rewarding working relationship, was probably the most difficult business decision I have ever faced in my comic career.

CBM: Do you purposely change your style of drawing to match the type of book you are working on? By that I mean sometimes your work has a more cartoon style, and sometimes it's more detailed and realistic.

Guice: It comes and goes with the material. I try and let the work find the direction it wants to go—what my gut instinct tells me is working or not.

CBM: During your career with DC you freelanced and did some great work for Acclaim on *Eternal Warrior*, *Turok*, and even *Sliders*. The *Sliders* TV show has a huge cult following and it looked like the series would have a long



run, but it did not last very long. I've always wondered what happened on *Sliders Narcotica*. You did an incredible ten pages and then another artist finished the book in a decidedly horrible style. Did deadline problems cause the change in artist?

Guice: Actually, I had been exclusive with Acclaim at that point for nearly a year, but as they quickly self destructed, I found myself free to return to DC. The *Sliders* job was a casualty of the changeover. I'm glad you liked the first ten pages, but I wasn't too terribly upset to let it go.

CBM: Next comes a long run on *Resurrection Man* and then the very popular *Birds of Prey*. Was it a disappointment to leave *BoP* just as it really took off and ends up as an acclaimed TV show?

Guice: Leaving *BoP* was hard because it meant leaving DC and leaving Chuck Dixon, who I thoroughly enjoyed working with. Not only is he a pretty terrific writer, but he's also a friend. I had no idea at the time of departure there was a TV show on the horizon, not that it would have affected my decision to leave.

CBM: Did Chuck Dixon allow you to share the plotting or story development at all?

Guice: Oh, I think I tossed the occasional request/suggestion toward him, but Chuck was pretty much running full steam ahead at that point on *BoP*. I was just along for the fun and mayhem. Working with Chuck is very much like one of his scripts, you open with a bang and then hang on for the thrill ride of your life.

CBM: On some of your work, I've noticed a certain resemblance to the style of Alex Toth, particularly in your use of blacks. Are you a fan of Toth?

Guice: Yes. Studying Alex and reading his commentaries are what initially pointed me toward the work of artists like Roy Crane and Noel Sickles. "Burma Sky" is probably one of the best sequentially told stories ever produced in the US comics market. I think anyone who desires to draw comic books for a living should begin by studying the man's work.

CBM: Looking at all the work you did at DC is there any issue or cover that defines your DC period?

Guice: I think probably some of the *BoP* work, the "Hunt for Oracle" storyline was loads of fun, as was the Gorilla Grodd arc which followed. How can anyone not like comics set in jungle cities filled with gun-toting gorillas? What's more "comic book" than that?

NEW HEIGHTS OF EXCELLENCE AT CROSSGEN

CBM: In 2001 you moved your family down to Tampa, Florida and joined the new company CrossGen Comics. How did the decision to leave one of the big companies and join an unknown firm come about?

Guice: I don't know if I'd categorize

CrossGen as being an unknown firm at that point. They had already established an impressive talent pool and track record early on. It was an extremely difficult decision, however. I wasn't upset over my treatment at DC, as I had been at Marvel—just the opposite in fact. I was very happy with both the book I was on and the writer I was working with. I was inking myself, so if I didn't like the art, I knew who was at fault there, as well.

Ron Marz called me up initially and inquired if I would be interested in coming down and looking at the facilities in connection with their offer of work. I agreed, but explained I really had no desire to leave DC, etc. I do remember Ron chuckling at that statement, which in retrospect, I suppose he had every right to do so since he was already down in Tampa and knew what I was about to discover for myself—CrossGen is a different sort of comic beast altogether.

I arrived with a nice little speech prepared in my mind should I need to decline their offer and thank them for their interest, but they had hooked me by the end of the first day. For me, at least, I finally found that comic company I dreamed about as a kid.

CBM: Was the prospect of working with writer Mark Waid part of the decision?

Guice: It wasn't even a point of consideration, to be honest.

CBM: The premise of *Ruse*, a supernatural Victorian/Gothic detective, is a big gamble, but it's been a huge success. Was it time for a story of this type or is it the dynamic creative team that has made the book a big hit?

Guice: I think your average comic fans are no different than readers of other literature throughout history; what they want are well-told, engaging stories with characters they can relate to and care about—whatever the genre. Far too much is made over whether this "type" of story or that one is what the market is waiting to embrace. A story is a story. Tell it well and there always seem to be readers who will seek it out.

CBM: The gargoyles are a blast, any chance that they will become more important in future stories?

Guice: The gargoyles, like so many other things in *Ruse*, still have much to be revealed. In *Ruse* #17 and #18, Simon, Emma and the readers will see the "birthplace" of the gargoyles on Arcadia for the first time. We reveal a few more of our trademark hints and suggestions along the way, but are far from finished with the tale of the gargoyles.

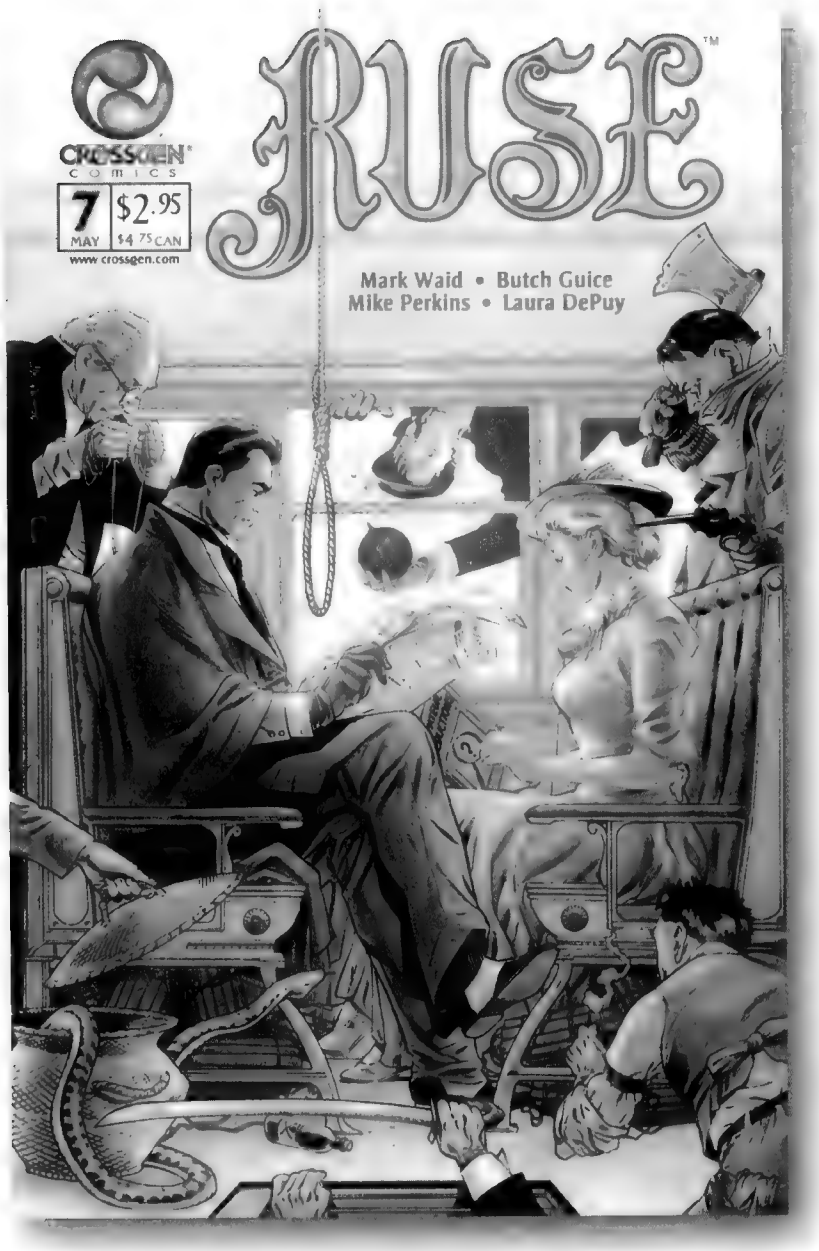
Ruse is one big, whopping, interrelated adventure. The only way to get more answers is to keep reading the issues. We try very hard to reveal our information in layers—a fact here, a snippet there. It all gets explained eventually, but the creative team will rarely draw you a straight line.

CBM: How involved are you in the writing of *Ruse*?

Guice: The actual scripting, not in the least. The entire team however enjoys a very free hand in contributing to the plotlines, characterizations and the underpinnings, which make up our book.

CBM: I believe the entire creative team of *Ruse*—yourself, Scott Beatty, Mike Perkins and Laura Martin are all located and working in the CrossGen office. Does this give the team the ability to truly interact in the creative process?

Guice: Actually, Scott Beatty is still out of office at this time, but he is in regular contact with everyone on the team. Mike, Laura and I, of course, see each other on a daily basis and toss thoughts and ideas back and forth pretty much incessantly—whether it might be art related or plot driven. Everyone has an equal voice on *Ruse*.



CBM: I will have to admit that I am totally biased when it comes to your work on *Ruse*. I believe the 13 issues (issue 6 was drawn by Jeff Johnson) of *Ruse* represent the apex of your career. Is this the best work you've ever penciled?

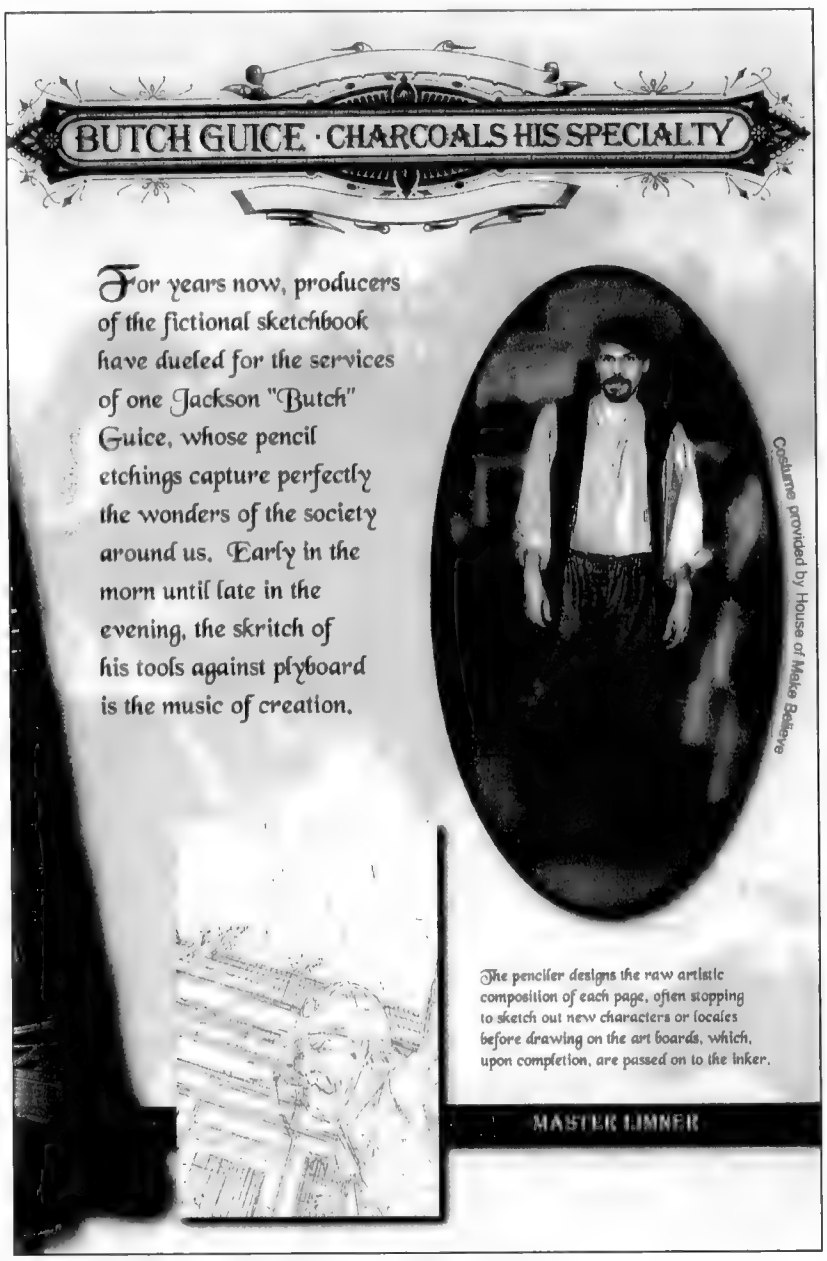
Guice: If it is, it's due more to the inspiration and support of my fellow team members than any sudden artistic insights of my own. Mike and Laura don't get nearly the praise deserved for their efforts. They are the heart and soul of *Ruse*, I'm just the incredibly lucky guy who got paired up with them. And Scott Beatty is just great. We spend hours on the phone laughing hysterically at ways to twist and turn stories inside out. *Ruse* fans will be very surprised with what's coming up in the next two years.

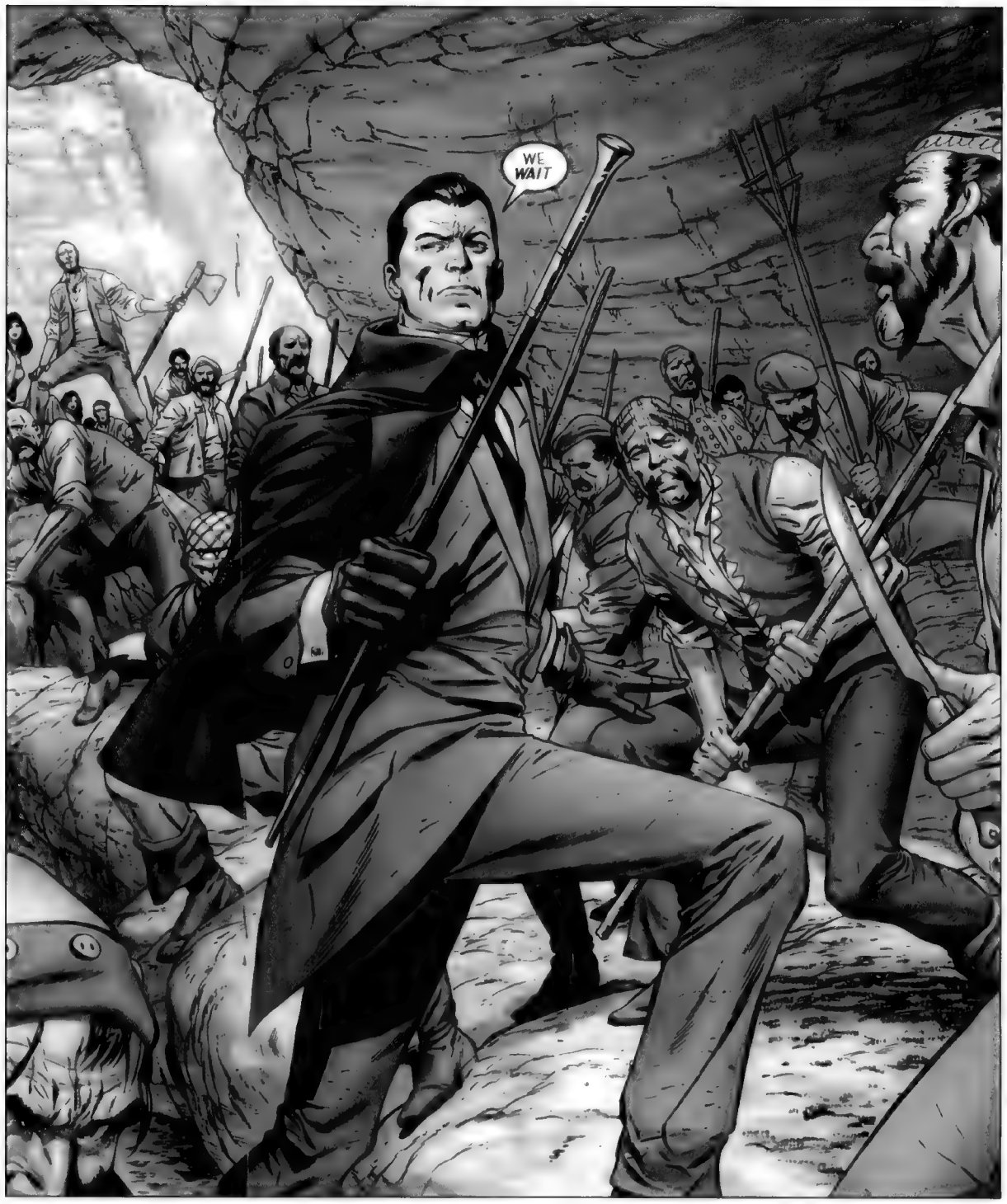
CBM: I would like to talk about what I call the "WOW Factor." To me this is that incredible experience that comes to a comics reader when they come across an amazing comic book. I've had that feeling three times in thirty years. First was *Amazing Spider-Man* #39 by John Romita Sr., second *Nick Fury* #1 by Jim Steranko and lastly *Ruse* #1. Has the industry responded in a similar fashion? Are you getting the respect for your work that you deserve?

Guice: There's really no way I can answer that question. I can only say I'm having more fun drawing comics currently than I have had at any other time in my career. I'm surrounded daily by some of the best people I know in the industry, many of whom I'm blessed to call my friends, there seems to be no limit to the support I receive from my wife and daughter in my efforts, and I get to jump out of bed each morning and do this job for a living.

CBM: Mike Perkins has a nice touch with his inks on your pencils, does the knowledge that you've got a great inker working with you give you more time to concentrate on the drawing?

Guice: Mike has one basic directive from me (said only half-jokingly at the time)...ink my intent, not the actual drivel I happen to produce. So far, he's succeeding beyond all my expectations. Mike's just great. His "Archard's Agents" penciling and inking work is a wonderful example of just how talented the guy really is.


BUTCH GUICE · CHARCOALS HIS SPECIALTY
For years now, producers of the fictional sketchbook have dueled for the services of one Jackson "Butch" Guice, whose pencil etchings capture perfectly the wonders of the society around us. Early in the morn until late in the evening, the skritch of his tools against plyboard is the music of creation.
Costume provided by House of Make Believe
The penciler designs the raw artistic composition of each page, often stopping to sketch out new characters or locales before drawing on the art boards, which, upon completion, are passed on to the inker.
MASTER LIMNER



CBM: I love the witty banter between Simon and Emma. Is it a challenge to translate that onto the page?

Guice: I love drawing "body language." *Ruse* would be a delight if for no other reason than it's filled with chances to draw all sorts of expressive body language. We've been blessed with terrific banter from both our writers, which has given me ample excuses to "play" with body language.

CBM: Emma is much more than a "Doctor Watson" to Archard. When will we get to see her live up to her full potential, and use those magic powers?

Guice: All things in their due time. Emma's "story" is due to take some rather surprising turns before everything is said and done; turns I don't think anyone reading the comic even suspects at this point.

CBM: The pages of *Ruse* contain some incredibly detailed artwork. Is there a lot of research involved in getting that Victorian era feeling?

Guice: In the beginning we did a lot of research, but by issue 4 or 5 we pretty much settled into the look, so much so, in fact, I recently emptied my bookcases of all the reference books and put them in storage. Since then, it pretty much all comes out of my head unless there is a very specific item or place we need to capture.

CBM: Is there much difference between working for the new kid on the block—CrossGen versus the old established companies like DC and Marvel?

Guice: If you mean in the actual physical demands of my job, no, not really. However, if you consider other, less tangible rewards such as having a vested interest in not only how well your own book, but the entire line, does? Or, perhaps, having a voice in the discussions at every stage about the visual look of every page? Or being encouraged to do your very best work at a reasonable pace of production because you are paid a regular salary, which allows you to get off the freelancer treadmill? Or no longer needing to worry about not having health insurance coverage should you be injured, or how you're going to survive financially when you reach retirement age? Then, yes, it's no secret. There are huge differences being at CrossGen.

CBM: What's coming in the future from Butch Guice and CrossGen? Any chance that you'll work on any other series?

Guice: I'm sure there will be other projects down the road eventually. In the meantime, I'm supposed to provide illustrations for a new R.A. Salvatore short story scheduled to appear in the back of CrossGen's first *DemonWars* trade paperback through Code 6 Comics, as well as possibly ink a few odds and end projects over Bart Sears. *Ruse* commitments and my assistant art director duties at CrossGen

don't allow a huge amount of extra time, but I enjoy squeezing in whatever I can.

CBM: Looking at your work on *Ruse*, you have been able to produce facial images with incredible expressions. This is some of the best facial work I have ever seen. It almost looks as if you've drawn from photos. What is the secret behind these amazing expressions?

Guice: I don't know if there is any big secret. Facial expressions are a lot of fun, particularly in a dialogue heavy book such as *Ruse*, where they play such an important role. I just try and support what the scene requires according to the plot, and then Scott Beatty comes along and writes some bit of brilliant prose, which makes it look like I'm actually a far better artist than I am.

CBM: In issue 5 of *Ruse*, there's a nice panel of the three Ladies of the night. A quick look at the CrossGen Website reveals that they're based on Tammy and Tiffany and Michelle, three members of the office staff Also Simon's agent Peter Grimes bears an uncanny resemblance to GrossGen owner Mark Alessi. It must be nice to work with such interesting people.

Guice: The people at CrossGen are just terrific, and have been very supportive about appearing in *Ruse* in various cameos. John Smith, our facilities manager and convention major-domo has appeared as well, and there are more cameos planned with other CrossGen employees.

CBM: The above is also mentioned in the letters page of *Ruse* # 8, with the additional teaser that Mrs. Guice has appeared in a cameo role in Ruse. I'm thinking she was the inspiration for the beautiful Gypsy on pages 4 and 10, in issue 8…

Guice: Uhmm…actually, she was the murder victim in issue 5. We didn't tell her until after the issue came out. It was something of a surprise, but she took it well.

CBM: Speaking of Mark Alessi. He's a Fan Boy, Genius, and multi-millionaire. Having Mark as a boss must be quite an experience. Clearly, here is a guy that understands that this is more than a business, it is also a major form of creativity. Is Mark the savior of the comics industry?

Guice: Time will tell in that regard, but it certainly won't be for lack of effort on Mark's part. He works around the clock, and then sets the clock back to gain a little extra time.

We need more Mark Alessi's in this industry right now.

CBM: Most of your work on *Ruse* is based upon two-page layouts. Now this has been used on occasion for years, but it has never been the standard format of any series. Is this something you've always wanted to do?

Guice: Actually, I never considered it until joining CrossGen. You wouldn't be able to do such a technique at Marvel or DC, what with all the advertising pages cluttering up the story.

I've always enjoyed the old Sunday newspaper adventure strips, and it dawned on me at the beginning of *Ruse* that I could treat the double-page spreads in much the same fashion. It just sort of snowballed from there into a trademark element of the book.

CBM: CrossGen has issued statues of Ashleigh (from *Scion*) and Arwyn (from *Sojourn*). Any chance we'll see some statues issued from the *Ruse* series?

Guice: I'm sure we'll see something along those lines as CrossGen's merchandising arm continues to expand.

CBM: One of the major differences between CrossGen and the other big companies is that there are no editors on the CrossGen books. This is a huge departure from the norm. Do you find this allows the creative team more flexibility?

Guice: I think the quality of the work speaks for itself at CrossGen. You come into the company with the understanding that you're going to be responsible for your book, whatever your particular part of the creative team.

Mark Alessi has said before that as he was dreaming up the structure of CrossGen, he was told time and again that his company would be unable to function without editors—that creative people cannot manage themselves. We're very happy to prove those people wrong 365 days of the year.

CBM: Anything else that you'd like to share with your fans, philosophically or comments on the state of the comic industry in general?

Guice: I would just like to thank everyone for their kind support over the years, both fan and professional. Thirty years ago I was a scrawny young kid with a head full of dreams about drawing comics someday. I've been incredibly lucky in realizing that dream, and being allowed to continue doing this for the last twenty years.

I can honestly say I'm having more fun now than when I dreamt the dream as a kid the first time around!

CBM: Thanks, Butch it's been a remarkable experience getting to know you!

Guice: Thank you, John.

John Stuart is a purchasing manager with Bell Canada, located in Toronto. He is a writer of short stories and is the author of an unpublished alternative history novel of the Battle of Gettysburg. This interview was conducted via email during December 2002 and January 2003 and was final edited by Butch Guice.

Archie Adaptations

[continued from page 33]

versions of the characters. As I recall, it was pretty faithful to the comics. I apologize for not having much information on this one, but the only place I've ever even seen it listed is in a collection of Archie stories from the early eighties, The cast was largely forgettable except for Charlene Tilton of *Dallas* fame, who played Betty.

The New Archies

This 1987 cartoon series produced for NBC was sort of a weird little hybrid. It focused on Archie as a junior high school student, rather than a high school

student. Despite the unexplainable focus on a somewhat "middle" Riverdale gang, all the familiar characters were present and accounted for. To me it always seemed stuck somewhere between Little Archie and Archie. It's pretty forgettable and only lasted the one season. Kind of a strange idea, but not nearly as strange as...

Archie: Return to Riverdale

There is no kind way to say this, really there isn't. This 1990 made-for-TV-movie is just plain bad. I'm not sure whose idea this was, but the basic plot is the Riverdale gang has graduated fom high school years ago and are now returning for a reunion. There is some interesting

For the tens of thousands of comics fans who found **Dallas** unwatchable, this is Charlene Tilton, Betty in the 1978 "review" style Archie live action on ABC.

casting (especially David Doyle as Mr. Weatherbee and Lauren Holly as Betty), but for the most part this film missed the point totally. The high school setting has always made the Archie comics fun and appealing to kids. Setting the story when the gang is middle-aged and out of school was just a terrible miscalculation on the part of the producers. This is akin to making Spider-Man a high school bully. Certainly, this is the worse stab at an Archie adaptation I've seen.

Archie's Weird Mysteries

This animated series was one of the PAX network's first efforts into original kids' programming. I believe the goal of

The ubiquitous genius Howard Morris was the voice of Filmation's Jughead, and dozens of other things. He's shown here during the Sid Caesar era.

the PAX network is to present wholesome, decent programming for the whole family. Of course, killing the competition in the ratings is always a good thing too, which is why I think someone suggested the *X-Files* style slant towards aliens and monsters. In a lot of ways this series reminds me of some of the more way-out comic stories that were done in the seventies and the eighties.

Marketplace Mail

[continued from page 7]

they?). I never really enjoy the interviews because the memories are flawed, but accept they could be popular so I don't condemn them. Perhaps I am wrong, I will continue to collect the book in the hope things do improve, but once it was essential reading on the day of purchase, now it is one of those things I read when I have several copies built up and nothing else better to read. I am tempted to say, "Come back, Gary Carter," but never having published a magazine myself I won't push my luck! A reply would be appreciated, but I expect I will be ignored, not knowing Robert Overstreet!

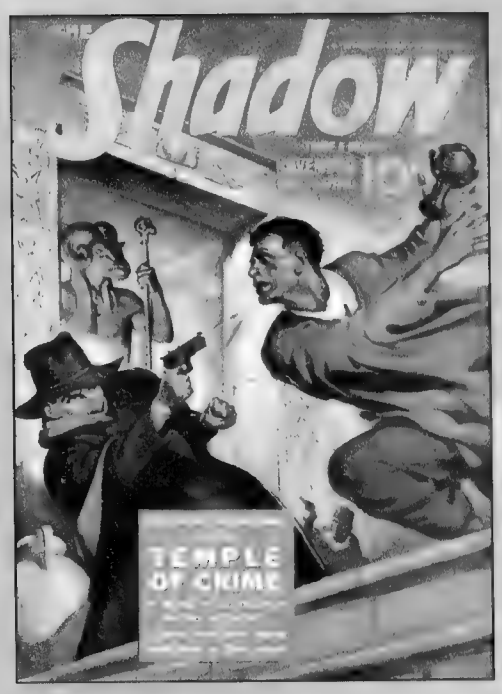
Paul Fearn
England

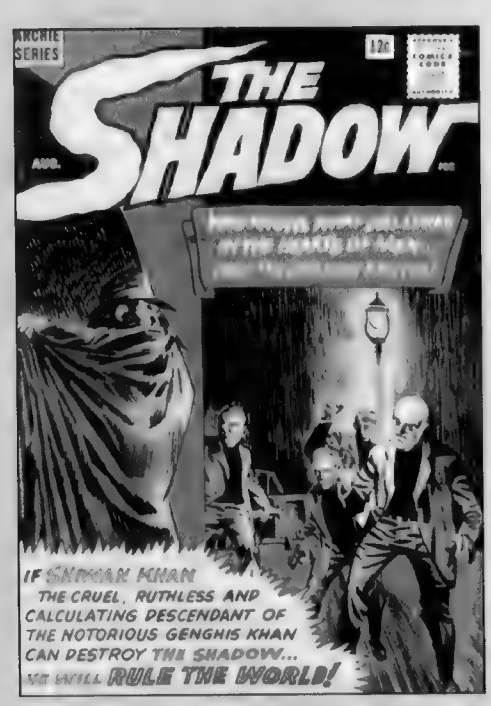
OK, Paul, I have to disagree with some of your conclusions. The "now wasted color section," as you refer to it, has recently presented several major articles on comic BOOKS that incorporate color cover reproductions in the layout. It is much easier to just grab four or nine old comic book covers and make a page called "cover gallery." In fact, if all we did in the expanded 16-page color section was reproduce covers, it would be a lot easier to do! But I much prefer working these color covers into major articles like we did with the Harry "A" Chesler feature in CBM *#91, or Will Murray's brilliant Batman article in* CBM *#100. Readers, speak to me! Do you agree with me or with Paul on this point? And I challenge your statement about* CBM *being more interested in the investment value or condition of a comic book than in the content! This magazine is all about content. The dealers and Michael Naiman bring up this point continually in their monthly "Market Reports." Of course, it is a main topic there because it is a fact of life that the values of comics today are dependent upon their condition and rarity. Finally, I personally read and respond to virtually every letter to the editor we receive. In* CBM *#98 we had so much material that we dropped the letters, but the response*

[continued on page 77]

THE Shadow

Who Knows What Evil Lurks in the Hearts of Editors...the Shadow Knows! by Paul Castiglia



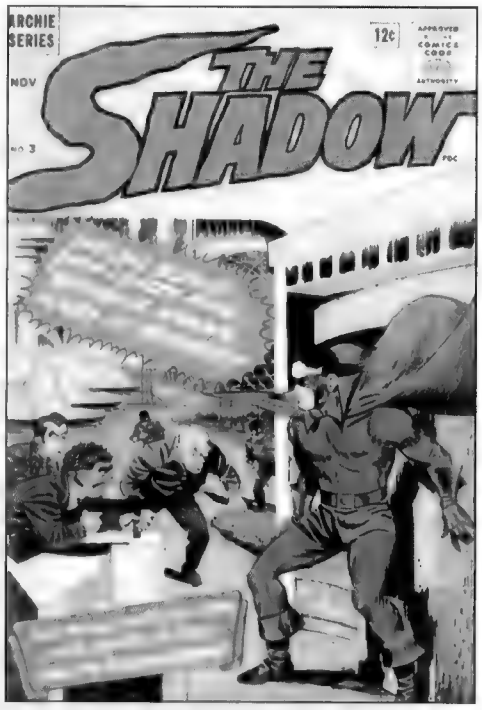

ARCHIE SERIES
12¢
THE SHADOW
IF SHIVKAN KHAN
THE CRUEL, RUTHLESS AND CALCULATING DESCENDANT OF THE NOTORIOUS GENGHIS KHAN CAN DESTROY THE SHADOW...
HE WILL RULE THE WORLD!

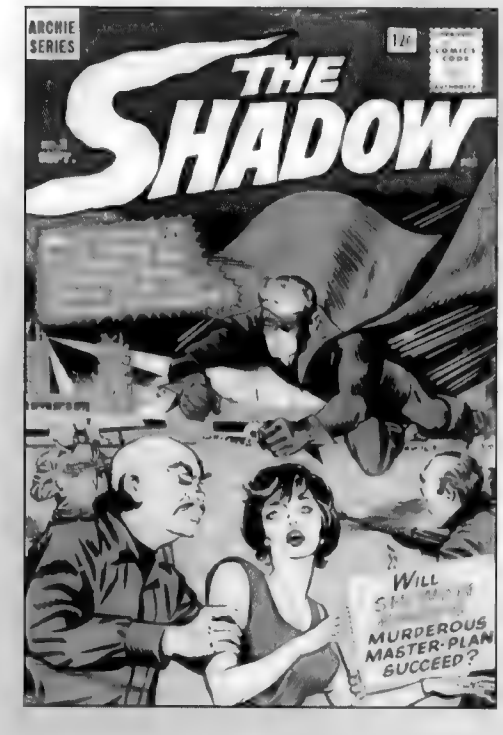
The Shadow

The mere mention of his name invokes many things: The classic radio show whose catch phrase, "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men—the Shadow knows!" remains firmly ingrained in the American consciousness; the original magazine pulps, enthralling millions before the advent of comic books; the merchandising spawned by the radio series; the movie serials and featurettes of the 1940s; and the various comic book adaptations—from the original Street & Smith editions to the Marvel, Dark Horse and, of course, celebrated Mike Kaluta DC issues! Not to mention his encounters with Batman! Like all great literary figures, however, the Shadow has a little-known skeleton in his closet—from August, 1964 until September, 1965, his course was charted by the good folks at...are you ready...Archie Comics!

When you first pick up the Archie Comics' version of *The Shadow* #1 (Aug 1964), the cover deceives you into thinking that this will be just like the classic Street & Smith Shadow Comics of the Golden Age. The slouch hat, the dark cloak and his distinctive nose are clearly in view. Then you turn to the first page. In a story entitled "The Shadow vs. the RXG Spymaster," we see Lamont Cranston as the Shadow—no hat, a bright blue cloak, and blonde hair astonishing us all right off the bat with the awesome power of...ventriloquism! That's right—he throws his voice! To change into his "secret" I.D., he does nothing more than put on glasses and remove his cape! Amazingly, this is all it takes to project the mystery man described as "America's top secret agent," in the "U.S. Secret Service!" Also on hand are secretary Margo Lane and chauffeur Shrevy. The plot involves the classic, evil Shadow villain Shiwan Khan trying to steal plans for a new, experimental "cold war" theme. Despite the trite story, we are treated to a James Bond-esque scene in which Cranston, trapped in his own limo, gleefully informs his would-be-assassin that his Rolls is equipped with a "dual set of controls," enabling him to control the car from the back seat and to knock out the driver with an electrical charge. In the back-up story, "The Eyes of the Tiger," the Shadow tackles some common thugs attempting an insurance scam by holding a pen-light under his face so that he appears ghost-like. The crooks think he is a tiger(!), and the Shadow takes advantage of their fear to knock them out. The issue is written by Bob Bernstein with art by John Rosenberger.

As if the incongruities of the Archie version weren't evident in issue #1, the cover to *The Shadow* #2 (Sep 1964), leaves no doubt. No, you're not seeing things: Hurtling across the cover is the Shadow—decked out in a...(gulp)...super-hero costume! A sign of things to come, for the stories inside portray him as he appeared in issue #1. "Shiwan Khan's Murderous Master Plan" opens with Lamont and Shrevy on their way to Red China via jet, almost being blown out of the sky by a "mushroom cloud that accompanies an atom bomb explosion." Once in Red China, the Shadow uses "mass hypnosis" on some soldiers, mesmerizing them into believing they are trapped behind bars. This constant use of hypnosis actually makes things less dramatic, like Superman's total invincibility in the old days. In fact, when captured by a Femme Fatale spy, he once more resorts to hypnosis to have her turn on her boss, Shiwah Khan. Once again, the script is by Bob Bernstein with art by John Rosenberger. The backup finds the legendary Paul Reinman rendering a Bernstein script, "Margo Lane's Honeymoon." Wishing Lamont would show some interest in her, Margo slumbers and dreams of their "honeymoon"—a honeymoon spent avoiding assassins! Like all the "teaser" Superman comics



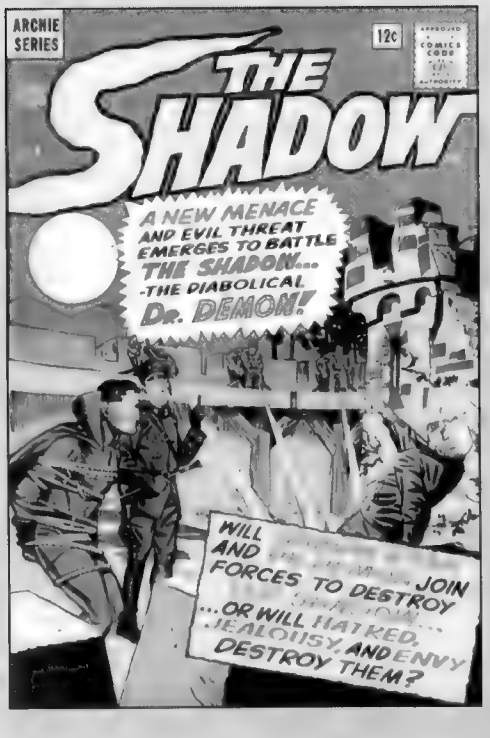


THE SHADOW
1964! YEAR OF POLITICAL TURMOIL AND INTERNATIONAL TENSION! PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR! YEAR OF THE WORLD'S FAIR! ALSO THE YEAR IN WHICH THE SHADOW ENTERED...
SHIWAN KHAN'S HOUSE of HORRORS!
GREAT GUNS! THIS ISN'T A LEGITIMATE WORLD'S FAIR EXHIBIT BUILDING! IT'S A MACABRE PAVILION BUILT BY SHIWAN KHAN TO TRAP ME!
YES, SHADOW! I WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR DEMISE! CONFUCIUS SAID... "ONE CANNOT CATCH A TIGER WITH A BUTTERFLY NET."

through the years where Supes "almost" bought the farm (many of which were also "dream" sequences), this issue should have the same collectibility.

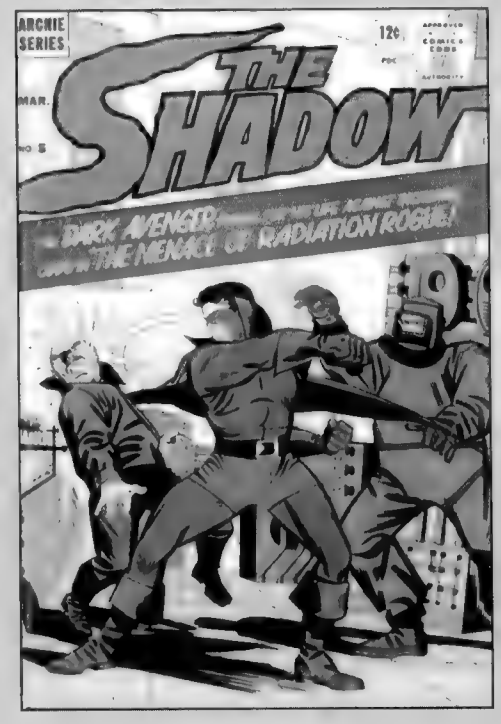
The real fun, however, starts in *The Shadow* #3 (Nov 1964)—featuring the "Superhero" Shadow of the previous issue's cover! This all-Bernstein/Reinman issue features "Shiwan Khan's House of Horrors"—a whirlwind adventure of the most implausible kind! Lamont, now sporting jet-black hair, is on the trail of Khan (who else?) and his men, who have kidnapped Margo. Unfortunately, Khan has brainwashed Shrevy to drive off the "un-completed Narrows bridge" (that's right, New Yorkers—it wasn't always there!) As they plummet, the Shadow re-hypnotizes Shrevy by staring into the rearview mirror, then gets them out of the water. In one of the most befuddling sequences ever, the Shadow goes undercover in Chinatown—by donning a large Mardi Gras-like mask worn over his own mask, which he's already wearing! Never mind the fact that he's still wearing his costume! This story catapults the Shadow all over the map—from Chinatown to the World's Fair, recalling classic '50s Batman (most recently paid homage to in the *Mask of the Phantasm* animated movie). Khan pulls out all the stops

SO DID I! DNA, STAY HERE AND DON'T GO TRAIPSING AFTER ME UNLESS YOU WANT TO DIE YOUNG!
DIE?
RIGHT! SOMEBODY'S IN MARGO'S OFFICE AND HE'S NOT THERE TO FIX THE RADIATOR / IF YOU HEAR SHOTS, PHONE FOR THE POLICE!
OFFICE
GOOD EVENING, MR. CRANSTON WE WERE EXPECTING YOU!
THEY'RE MAKING OFF WITH MARGO!
NO EXIT, MR. CRANSTON / YOU'D ONLY RUN INTO A BULLET!
WHAT'S YOUR GAME?
STAND WHERE YOU ARE AND YOU'LL FIND OUT!
OOFFFF!!
SORRY, CHUM / I'M NOBODY'S SITTING DUCK!


ARCHIE SERIES
12c
THE SHADOW
A NEW MENACE AND EVIL THREAT EMERGES TO BATTLE THE SHADOW... -THE DIABOLICAL DR. DEMON!
WILL ... AND ... FORCES TO DESTROY ... JOIN ...
...OR WILL HATRED, JEALOUSY, AND ENVY DESTROY THEM?

in this story—sharks, lions, tanks, etc. As so eloquently put by the observant Shadow, "Great Guns—this was all a macabre plot to trap me!" Don't leave now—his dialogue gets better—"Six sharks in the pool! Six bullets in my automatic! I'd better not miss!" "The Princess of Death" tries to prove Lamont and the Shadow are one and the same in a back-up tale which we've read before (and will no doubt again). This issue also begins one page strips of the Simon & Kirby character, The Fly, which run to issue 7.

None of the previous issues could have prepared readers for the villain of *The Shadow* #4 (Jan 1965): "The Diabolical Dr. Demon," Hitler's "evil scientist," has come out of hiding to "finish Der Fuhrer's work." Only two men can keep him from ruling the world—our hero, of course, and Dr. Demon's only competitor, the irrepressible Shiwan Khan (Does this guy never learn?!) In this Bernstein and Reinman outing, just to make sure we're aware of who the bad guy is, we are told that "If Hitler had listened to Dr. Demon, Germany might have won the war!" Jeepers—thank goodness for Schickelgruber's momentary deafness! There is an unnerving sequence where the Doc traps both the Shadow and Khan in a furnace, but thankfully the Doc jumps to his own death. Seemingly in keeping with the theme of intolerance, "The Human Bomb," title character of the backup story, looks like a KKK grand master with dynamite strapped to his white cloak. Margo and Shrevy (who really should know better) read Lamont's mail and learn of threats from a mad bomber. They plan to stop

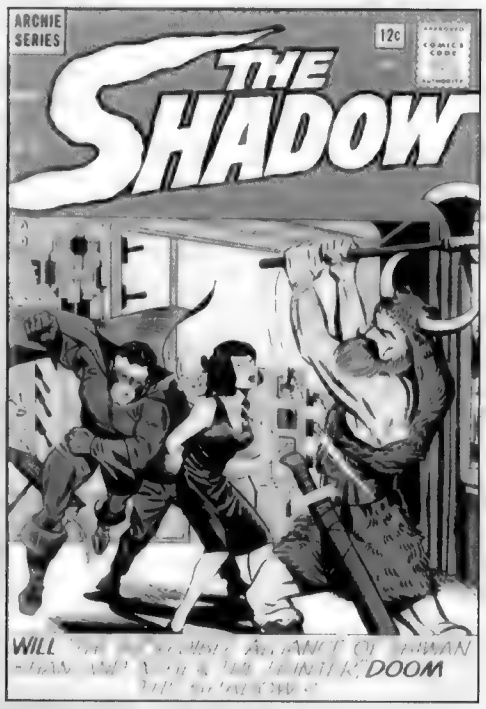


ONE MORNING, IN A SWANK NEW YORK CITY TOWN HOUSE, AS WEALTHY LAMONT CRANSTON AWAKENS....
YAWN!
MY COMPLIMENTS TO THE CHEF, SHREVY! HE'S A CULINARY GENIUS! REMIND ME TO TRIPLE HIS SALARY!
NOW THAT I'VE INDULGED MY APPETITE, IT'S TIME FOR THE MORNING WORK-OUT THAT KEEPS ME IN TRIM!
A FEW TWISTS OF THE DIAL AND THE DOOR SCHWANGS ON ITS MASSIVE HINGES TO REVEAL MY BEHIND-THE-SCENES SURVIVAL-COURSE ROOM! NOT EVEN MY CLOSEST EMPLOYEES KNOW WHAT GOES ON IN THERE!
THEN, AS THE MULTI-MILLIONAIRE STEPS INTO THE MYSTERY ROOM AND CLOSES THE PONDEROUS METAL DOOR BEHIND HIM...
OFF WITH MY CIVVIES! ENTER THE SHADOW!
NOW TO RUN THE SURVIVAL-COURSE! I'LL BE GREETED BY A BARRAGE OF LEAD AS I ONCE OF THE HIDDEN MACHINE-GUNS POPPED OUT!
SORRY I'VE ALREADY HAD BREAKFAST! I DON'T FEEL LIKE EATING LEAD!
RATA-TA-TA-TAT-TAT.

him. Lamont hears their scheme over the intercom, and when the mad bomber arrives, hypnotizes them into thinking that they acted alone in saving him, even though he used his own "Shadow" powers.

From the silliest villain names file, *The Shadow* #5 (Mar 1965) brings us, "The Menace of Radiation Rogue," as well as the scripting talents of Jerry "Superman" Siegel! A Shiwan Khan dupe who Reinman renders in a red radiation suit, he looks like he's ready to date Ma Hunkel, the original "Red Tornado!" (The Siegel and Reinman creative team remain on board until the final issue). Once a scientist whose experiments went awry and left him doused in radiation, he concocts a serum that will keep him alive for the next few days. He has the power to transfer the deadly radiation to others. At one point, he even manages to get a hold of the Shadow, spouting this classic dialogue while contaminating him: "Now you know why I'm called Radiation Rogue! You probably thought it was a vainglorious, meaningless name, but now you know better, eh?" The amazingly anti-climactic ending has the Shadow brainwash ("yawn") Radiation Rogue into turning on Shiwan Khan.

"The Incredible Alliance of Shiwan Khan and Attila the Hunter," from *The Shadow* #6 (May 1965), finds Khan teaming up with another villain of infamous descent—just as Shiwan is related to Ghengis Khan, so, too is Attila related to his namesake (I keep waiting for Chucky Manson Jr. to show up)! This story is notable for such classic Khan dialogue as his description of Attila, "A handsome, hard faced Asiatic who fights like a demon!", as well as his self-description, "I am a skilled practitioner in the black art of skullduggery, bar none!" Another multi-locales tale, from the waters of the New England coast to the Cranston Museum of Art to Terror Island! As if two super-villains weren't enough, one of Khan's henchman disguises himself as the Shadow and tries to kill him. He retreats

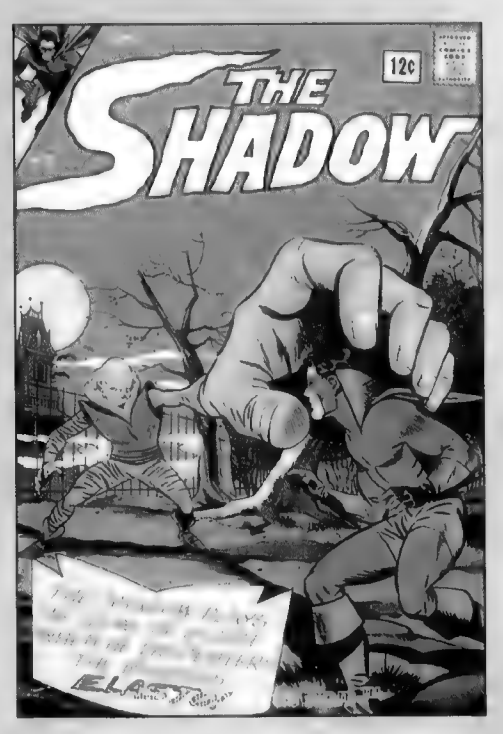


when he realizes that, without the Shadow, Khan would no longer need his services and would probably execute him!

The Shadow #7 (Jul 1965) will live in infamy as the issue in which the Archie editors outdid themselves. It wasn't enough that they stuck the classic mystery man in a super-hero suit—in this issue, he acquires a "belt buckle power beam" and (I'm not making this up) "multi-action Shadow gun," enabling him to shoot "weakness gas" and "electric blasts!" "The Shadow Battles The Brute," however, is a classic even without these new gadgets! Shiwan Khan encourages his stooges to duke it out in an all-encompassing slugfest. The last guy standing gets to be zapped with a "growth ray" (good thing he wasn't wearing a pacemaker)! The newly huge thug, a bald guy the size of the Kingpin and wearing Plastic Man's red, laced shirt and goggles is sent out to pillage the world. The Shadow tries to hypnotize him, but can't penetrate the goggles. This leads to a battle on the estate of "Cyrus Galloway, rich explorer," whose mementos, including live crocodiles, proliferate his property. The Shadow lures the Brute into an elephant trap, which he soon escapes from. The Shadow then breaks the Brute's goggles with a "supersonic note" from a "special whistle," hoping now to hypnotize him. However, he's also "wearing shatter proof contact lenses that screen out hypnotism." Eventually Khan double-crosses the Brute by not giving him his cut of the action! The Brute turns good and saves Margo, sacrificing himself by jumping in her place as a stone gargoyle statue is about to crush her. This roller-coaster of a comic is augmented by great bad dialogue from the Shadow and the Brute: "There's nothing I Khan...I mean can...do to prevent it!", says the Shadow at one point, while the Brute pontificates, "Of course I have a terrible temper, smash things, rob and steal and am as treacherous as an eel! Outside of that, I am quite likeable! And handsome, too...see?" A caption sums it all up best, "Remember that in the Archie Series of slam-bang, surprise-a-second comics, anything can happen, and usually does!" This is truly an amazing issue!

"The Game of Death" in *The Shadow* #8 (Sep 1965) finishes off the series with a standard one-hero-vs.-all-his-villains story. A rich guy employs various villains to kill the Shadow, and the one who succeeds will be given the honor of unmasking him. They include Attila the Hunter, the "insidious" Elasto (a new villain who—you'll never guess—stretches), the "diabolical" Dimensionoid (an alien who can transform himself into "any number of geometrical monsters," and whose only motivation is that he has to kill the Shadow as part of his initiation into a "cabal of Ultra-villains" on his planet), and two baddies who perished in previous issues: Dr. Demon and Radiation Rogue. No reasons are given for their resurrections. The Shadow prevails in this by-the-numbers entry; however, his method of defeating Elasto is quite ingenious: He tricks him into stretching into the "ionosphere," where the "extreme lack of oxygen" makes him "black out." In the end, the Shadow psyches out the rich dude—taunting that he can't go through with killing him. Instead of whisking him off to justice, the Shadow implores him to "see a psychiatrist!"

The series also included text stories which actually were more faithful to the character.



The Archie version of the Shadow is quite an enigma in the history of comics. Yet, for many reasons, I feel it is quite collectable. Certainly, it is the first time Archie licensed a property from an outside source (and one with an established track record to boot); it is definitely a product of its times, what with all the cold war paranoia; it features some of the hokiest and most rapid-fire dialogue since dragnet; the involvement of Siegel and Reinman; and of course it takes an established character and turns his world upside down! Who knows what lunacy lurks in the back issue boxes?!...

Paul Castiglia, like the Shadow, is a man of mystery—or at least he writes mysteries as one of the scribes behind Archie's Mysteries. *In addition to being a freelance writer for Archie Comics, Paul also edits special trade paperback collections reprinting classic comic book stories from Archie Comics' 60+-year history.*

Archie TV Pilot

[continued from page 32]

scenes with Simpson, but I thought the two kids really clicked. This is especially true in the last scene where they wind up attending the dance together (I would have loved to have seen how Karen would have been developed in future episodes). Green also did guest appearances on *My Three Sons* and *Family Affair*, as well as appearing in the 1965 film *Zebra in the Kitchen.*

Except for Simpson, Betty and Veronica are perhaps the finest casting of all the kids. The actress playing Betty is good, and she manages to come off just as sweet and adorable as the comic book version. Still, the actress playing Veronica is better. She perfectly plays Veronica as a manipulative brat, just like she is in the comics. She switches from sweet and sugary to sexy and seductive to she-devil between bats of her eyelashes. After seeing the actress play this part, I can honestly say I understand why Archie would keep coming back to a girl who is just no good for him. This young lady is the bad girl you can't say no to.

Neither actress is listed in the end credits, so they were probably featured in the opening credits (I'm assuming between Simpson's credit and the credits for Schallert and Winters). I've checked every possible source to find out the names of these actresses, I've come up snake eyes everywhere I looked. If there is anyone out there who can tell me who they are, I'd love to know.

Harriet MacGibbon, professionally if predictably cast as a club woman.

The casting of some of the kids (especially Jughead and Reggie), though, is the main weakness. On the other hand, the adult characters couldn't have been better, a who's who of classic film and television. We've already discussed Mr. Andrews and Mr. Weatherbee. Let's talk about the women of the Archie pilot.

Mrs. Andrews is Jean Vanderpyl. All Vanderpyl's scenes are with Schallert and Simpson. She works well with both actors and she carries off her role nicely. I'm sure that the failure of the pilot didn't bother her too much. At the time this was filmed, she already had a regular job as the voice of Wilma Flintsone in Hanna-Barbara's immortal animated series, *The Flintstones*. Nor should the failure of a sale have upset Mary Grace Canfield, who played Miss Grundy. It no doubt left her schedule open to assume the role she is best remembered for, Ralph Monroe on *Green Acres,* a year later. Still, it would have been great to see how she would have eventually made out with her object of affection in the pilot, Mr. Weatherbee!

Two parts could have become either semi-recurring roles, or could have been written for use in just the pilot. If Mrs. Finch, the president of the PTA, had been a recurring character, it would have been nice for actress Harriet MacGibbon to play a character who is a bit nicer than Mrs. Drysdale on the sitcom classic, *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

The part of Miss Kenny, Mr. Weatherbee's secretary, was a small role played by actress Maggie Pierce, who had been one of the female leads in the Vincent Price horror anthology, *Tales of Terror.* Had *Archie* sold as a series, Pierce might not have become the co-star in one of the most infamous prime time clunkers of all time, *My Mother the Car*. Pierce's scenes are mostly with Roland Winters, but she does have a cute scene with Simpson/Archie as he waits for Mr. Weatherbee after Miss Grundy has sent him to the principal's office. Archie kids with Miss Kenney that if a "best girl" is determined by how much time a fella spends with her, then they're practically engaged.

All in all, the 1964 *Archie* pilot was a good effort. Why it never became a prime time show is a mystery to me. At that time, the Archie line of comics had been going strong for twenty years (they even survived the bleakest time ever for comics, in the mid-1950s). Heck, Archie was also one of a handful of comic book characters whose books never ceased publication.

Take a look at one of the most popular shows of the time period, *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*. This show was inspired by the Archie comics in numerous ways. In the lead of both there is the constantly love-struck hero (Archie and Dobie), the unrequited love interest yet ever-hopeful best girl (Betty and Zelda Gilroy), the goofy, yet wise in his way sidekick (Jughead and Maynard G. Krebs), the archrival and the jerk of the series (Reggie and Milton Armitage) and the spoiled, little rich girl (Veronica and Thalia Menninger).

Maybe since *Dobie* was ending its run at the time *Archie* was pitched, some smart executive thought the audience for teen comedies was drying up. Maybe one of them even thought Archie was a Dobie clone, not realizing Archie was the real deal. Whatever the real reason was, Archie didn't make it as a series. If he hadn't been flunked out prematurely, I think Archie could have gone to the top of the Class of 1964.

As author Douglas says, info on John SImpson is difficult to come by. **CBM** was unable to locate a photograph, but at press time discovered that a Jerry Mathers website indicates Frank Bank, **Leave it to Beaver**'s Lumpy Rutherford, appeared as Archie on an unsold **Archie** pilot done for or by ABC in an unnamed year (**jerrymathers.tv**).

DC Direct Makes The Scene

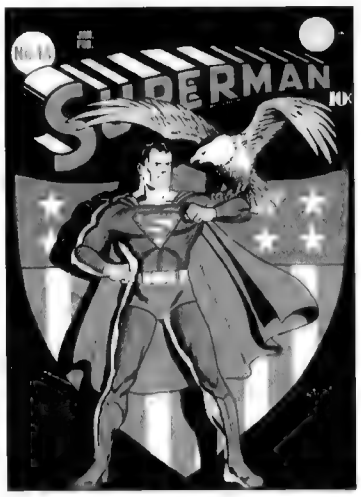
by Mike Wilbur

All characters © DC Comics

Some of the more interesting statue releases through **DC Direct** over the last few years have not been the standard "character in heroic pose" or "character in action pose," but rather their varied assortment of cover and scene re-creations.

Translating classic covers or historic moments from printed page to three dimensions presents challenges for the sculptor not found in "ordinary" single-character static pieces. Elements such as forced-perspective and anatomical exaggeration, common in comic art as tools to convey depth and motion, often present difficult obstacles for a sculptor to overcome. It's usually necessary to compromise somewhat on the literal transposition of visual elements in order for the sculpted piece to achieve a "natural" look. And, the more diverse elements that make up the subject art, the more difficult the job.

DC Direct has been fortunate to have on their creative roster a handful of gifted artists whose work in this area has been exceptional. The bulk of the re-creation pieces have been the work of two primary sculptors, **Tim Bruckner** and **William Paquet**, with three single-unit contributors interspersed.



Superman #14. A classic patriotic cover from the dark days of World War II.

The line was launched in 1999 with the release of the **Crisis on Infinite Earths: Death of Supergirl** statue. Based on artist **George Perez**'s cover art for October 1985's *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #7, the Death of Supergirl was the first DC Direct piece to carry sculptor Bruckner's name.

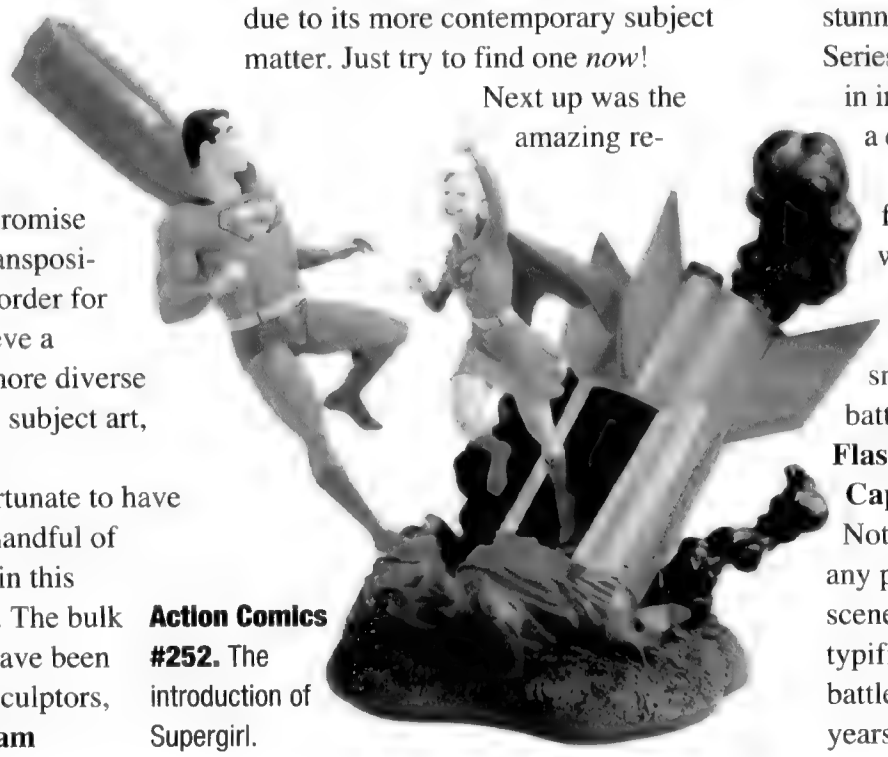
Featuring an anguished Superman cradling the lifeless form of Supergirl in his arms, this was a powerful piece that somehow slipped below many collectors' radar screens when first released, due to its more contemporary subject matter. Just try to find one *now*!

Next up was the amazing re-creation of the cover to *Flash* #123, the legendary **Flash of Two Worlds** story. The issue was written by Gardner Fox who, with fellow writer John Broome and editor Julius Schwartz, co-created DC's Silver Age. The story was significant in that it brought together for the first time a hero from DC's Silver Age with his Golden Age counterpart. Bruckner's rendition perfectly captures the dramatic cover scene wherein the two Flashes, on opposite sides of a brick wall, speed to save a workman from a falling girder.

I was fortunate enough to be at the DC booth in San Diego in 2000 when DC prez **Paul Levitz** brought legendary Flash artist **Carmine Infantino**, who drew the landmark issue, over to see the prototype of the statue. A visibly impressed Infantino asked Levitz if he could have one.

Rounding out the Y2K releases was Bruckner's take on artist **Brian Bolland**'s stunning cover for *Wonder Woman* (2nd Series) #72. Capturing Bolland's imagery in intricate detail, **Wonder Woman** was a quick sell-out.

Year 2001 saw the release of four re-creation pieces, beginning with sculptor **Sam Greenwell**'s smaller-scale battle scene, **Flash vs. Captain Cold**. Not highlighting any particular scene, the piece typified the many battles over the years between the



Action Comics #252. The introduction of Supergirl.

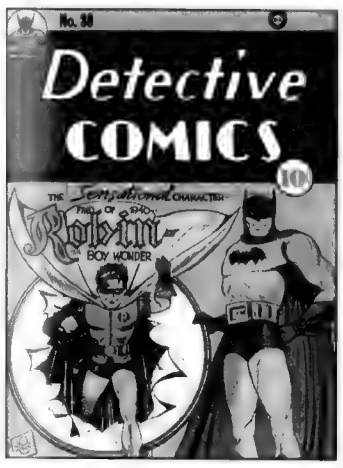
Superman: Departure from Krypton. Superman's parents prepare to save their infant son from the imminent destruction of their planet.

All Star Comics #3. Bookends depicting the first appearance of the world's first super-hero team, the Justice Society of America.

Silver Age Flash and his icy nemesis.

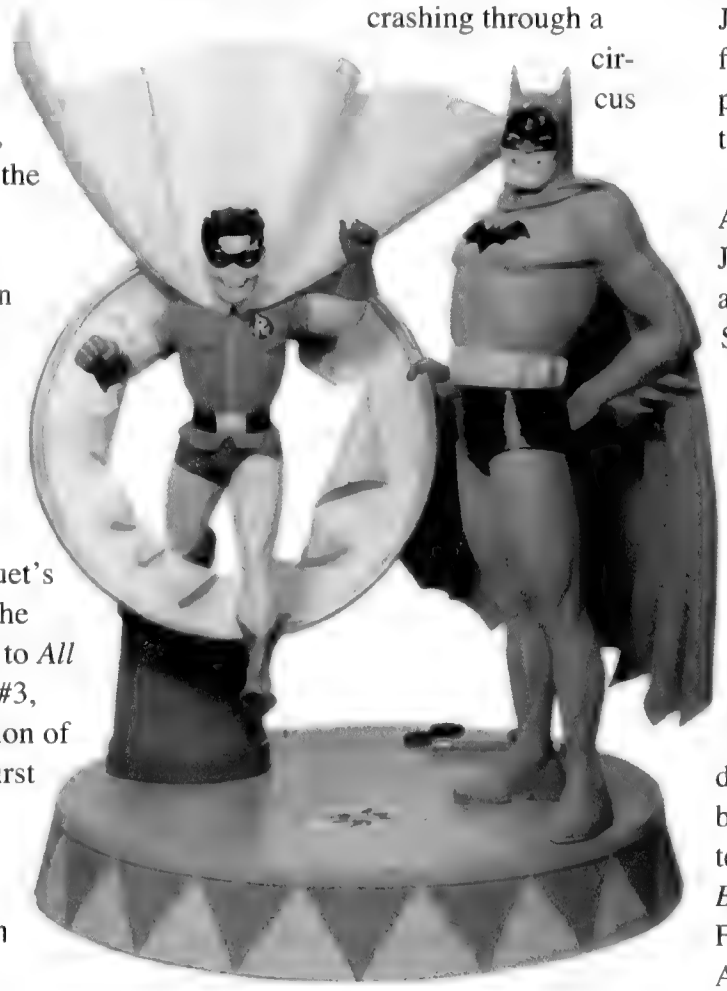
Tim Bruckner struck again in May '01 with the **Action Comics** #252: **Arrival of Supergirl** statue, re-creating, as the name indicates, the momentous arrival on Earth of Superman's Kryptonian cousin Supergirl. An astonished Superman reels back as a young girl, in a costume similar to his, flies out of the crashed rocket he has flown to investigate.

July '01 was heralded by the release of William Paquet's rendition of the classic cover to *All Star Comics* #3, the introduction of the world's first super-hero team, the legendary **Justice Society of America**. The famous scene of the roster of eight heroes seated around their meeting table was produced as a massive pair of bookends, each piece featuring half the table and half the heroes. Also displayable together, the JSA bookends are an impressive piece of workmanship.



Detective Comics #38. The introduction of Robin.

The final re-creation for the year was the October '01 release of the *Detective Comics* #38: **Introduction of Robin** statue. Bringing to life the well-known image of the young Boy Wonder crashing through a circus hoop held by a proudly smiling Batman, the piece was masterfully sculpted by Bruckner.

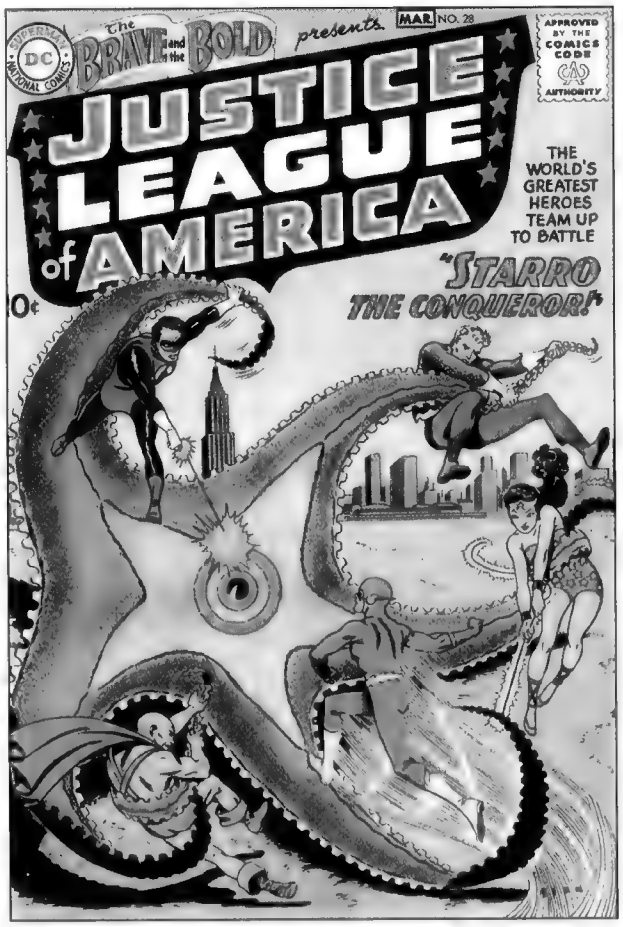


Only three re-creation pieces hit the market during 2002, beginning with the Paquet designed and sculpted **Superman: Departure from Krypton**. Depicting the sad, yet hopeful Lara and Jor-El, parents of Superman bidding farewell to their infant son as they prepare to launch him into space from their doomed planet.

A "sequel" to this piece, **Superman: Arrival in Smallville**, was released in January 2003 release. Also designed and sculpted by Paquet, Arrival in Smallville shows Jonathan Kent cradling the infant he just rescued from the crashed rocket, as an awestruck Martha Kent looks on.

And who'd have thought, of all the multitude of villains in the DC Universe, we'd get a statue of **Starro the Conqueror**? But that's him, front-and-center, in the *Brave and Bold* #28: Introduction of the Justice League of America statue. Capturing in three dimensions the famous cover of the book that brought us the first super-hero team of the Silver Age, the *Brave and Bold* #28 statue features the figures of Flash, Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, Aquaman and Martian Manhunter

Superman: Arrival in Smallville. Ma and Pa Kent find the rocket carrying the infant from Krypton


The BRAVE and the BOLD presents
MAR NO. 28
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA
THE WORLD'S GREATEST HEROES TEAM UP TO BATTLE
"STARRO THE CONQUEROR!"
10¢

Brave & Bold #28. The first appearance of the Justice League of America.

battling the massive invader from space. Sculpted by **James G. Mathews**, this is another piece that must be seen to be believed.

The final item in our roster, to date, is the inspiring image of **Superman**, as he appeared on artist **Fred Ray**'s awesome star-spangled cover of *Superman* #14, dated March-April 1942. As sculpted by **James Shoop**, the *Superman* #14 statue flawlessly captures the patriotic essence of Ray's wartime classic.

Re-creation pieces present an interesting alternative for those who aren't normally interested in character statues. They're a more intimate and involving look into the comics and characters we enjoy, because they draw us into the story, instead of just posing the characters. You can look over at your display case and see a little three-dimensional slice of your favorite classic stories leaping from the page!

by Michael Naiman

Bagged Ducks, Astro Boy, Wonder Con and more

Wonder Con was held the weekend of April 25-27 at the new venue of Moscone Center in San Francisco. It proved to be an entertaining and lucrative show for one and all. While in competition with the Pittsburgh show during the same weekend, many dealers from around the country attended. Close to 100 vendors and 25 small press exhibitors enjoyed the spacious aisles and comfortable setting. It looked as if the attendance was up from last year's show.

While this show has never attracted the Big Money investor/speculators (is this show held too soon before San Diego?), many sales of import were noted. The original art cover to *Tales of Suspense* #84 sold for $45,000 cash; *Amazing Spider-Man* #3 VG $260, #14 VF $1100; *Hulk* #2 VG $400, #4 VG $200, #5 VG $175, #102 FN $100 (two copies); Golden Age *Green Lantern* #7 VF- $900; *Military* #1 VG $1300; *Police* #16 VF- $500; Golden Age *Captain America*—all in FN/VF—#21 $1000, #25 $1700, #62 $850 and #71 $1200; *Justice League of America* #5 VF/NM $400; *Marvel Mystery* #30 FN/VF $1000; *Sub-Mariner* #34 VF+ $1000; *Witches Tales* #23 NM File copy $225. Thirty copies of *Spectacular Spider-Man* #1 sold for $25 each; four copies of *X-Men* #10 FN/VF sold for $150 each.

Many fans of John Rosenberger know that he did 18 covers for *Adventures of the Fly* and 11 covers for the *Adventures of the Jaguar*. Of those covers, 13 are known to still be in existence—12 owned by one individual and one by another. Certainly a rarity among non-DC/Marvel art collectors! This weekend at Wonder-Con, the cover for issue 16 (first cover appearance of Fly-Girl and last 10 cent issue) sold for $3000. Don't count on seeing any others for sale in the near future!

Other recent sales of note (these reflect the old *Guide* values since this is being written in mid-April, published some time later): *Amazing Spider-Man* #129 NM $355 (1.5X *Guide*); A NM copy of the 1966 Golden Record reprint of *ASM* #1 $250 (1.1X *Guide*), *Ultimate Spider-Man* #1 (NM White variant) $255 (2.12X *Guide*).

For you Disney fans: only the second known existing example of an unopened bagged Whitman *Uncle Scrooge* #179 recently sold for $970 (1.94X *Guide*) and a slabbed 9.6 issue of *Uncle Scrooge* #219 (the first Don Rosa Scrooge story "Son of the Sun") sold for $49.99 (2X *Guide*).

Auction houses Sotheby's and Christies said they each will pay $20 million to settle antitrust claims by overseas customers in a price-fixing case. Former Sotheby's Chairman A. Alfred Taubman was convicted two years ago of plotting with Christie's chief Anthony Tennant to fix commissions paid by sellers of fine art (comics included) from 1993 to 1999. The government said the illegal collusion to end the houses' costly rivalry deprived sellers of the chance to bargain for a lower price. It also eliminated discounts and resulted in nonnegotiable commissions, costing sellers as much as $400 million. The two houses control nearly the entire worldwide auction market in everything from furniture to antiques to fine art.

Is the next step an investigation into some of the alleged questionable self-dealing practices of the smaller auction houses? Time will tell.

It is springtime and there appear to be new businesses popping up that are looking to get into the comic-grading arena. There is Comic Grading Group and Delaware collector Joe Hummel's company Pop Culture Certified (**www.popculturecertified.com**), which is designed to give a grading opinion or certification for comic books. There is also word that PSA (the West Coast sports card grading company) is looking to form a comic grading and certification arm of their firm. Rumor has it that a well-known former sports-card-turned-comic-collector/dealer/consultant and a couple of his Los Angeles-based buddies will be heading up this new venture. There is always room for competition in this industry. Let's see what happens!

A landmark event in Japanese pop culture was just celebrated on April 7th. On that date, Japan celebrated the birthday of Astro Boy. When Astro Boy was created by the legendary Osamu Tezuka in the 1950s, he was placed in the distant future that would be home to boy robots. And so it was that he was created on April 7, 2003.

Astro Boy originated with Tezuka Osamu's previous work, "Captain Atom," which was serialized in the Manga magazine, *Shonen*, from April 1951 to March 1952. The boy-like robot Atom is just one of the characters in "Captain Atom," but in "Astro Boy" he is the main character. In 1963, the animated program *Astro Boy* made its debut on TV as the first commercial animated TV program in Japan, produced by Tezuka's Mushi Production. The 30-minute program was aired weekly, receiving high public and critical acclaim, and led to Japan's first TV animation craze.

In the early 1960s American television was flooded with Japanese manga and animation. Characters like Astro Boy and Gigantor captured the imagination of American audiences and

CBM Market Watch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action			
#101	VG	$225	87%
Adventure			
#434	VF-	$19	90%
Air Fighters			
#5	GD	$142	1.31X
All-Flash			
#2	GD	$275	86%
Amazing Spider-Man			
#1	VG	$1800	1.07X
#4	VG+	$410	1.20X
#6	VG	$265	95%
#6	VG	$255	92%
#7	FN-	$202	74%
#8	FN	$244	89%
#9	FN	$222	76%
#10	VG+	$127	70%
#12	FN+	$120	80%
#13	VG+	$122	87%
#14	VG	$177	55%
#15	VF-	$255	47%
#17	FN+	$245	1.34X
#19	VF	$203	73%
#33	VF	$96	60%
#34	VF	$81	51%
#36	VF	$71	45%
#37	VF	$125	79%
#50	VG	$76	88%
#113	NM	$33	60%
#114	VF	$20	59%
#120	VF-	$30	57%
#121	NM	$400	1.9X
#121	VF	$267	2.28X
#122	NM	$280	1.22X
#129	VF	$129	89%
#129	NM	$330	1.27X
Batman			
#117	VF	$170	77%
Battle (Atlas)			
#70	FN	$25	64%
#68	FN	$21	50%
#66	FN	$25	64%
Black Knight			
#2	FN	$180	98%
Black Rider			
#14	VG+	$7	18%
Blue Beetle			
#33	VG	$54	Guide
Captain Atom			
#89	VF-	$29	76%
Captain Rocket			
#1	VG	$40	47%
Cindy Comics			
#31	VG	$12	46%
Crime Does Not Pay			
#56	VG	$12	34%
Daredevil			
#5	VF	$140	92%
#6	VF-	$90	85%
#100	VF-	$30	1.5X
#131	VG	$40	5X
#168	NM	$65	76%
Detective			
#166	FN	$165	Guide
#415	NM-	$35	92%
#440	NM-	$55	92%

dramatically affected graphic design and visual arts in the United States. The influences of this early anime/manga is clearly visible in today's animation and comic art, and the popularity of contemporary Japanese anime series like *Dragon Ball Z*, *Pokemon* and *Sailor Moon* continues to soar."

Comics in Japan are thick substantial works of hundreds of pages, not like the American comic books, which are more like flimsy pamphlets. The Japanese versions can be considered comic tomes. The one who is most responsible for this development in the comic field is Osamu Tezuka, who is known in Japan as the "Manga no Kamisama," the "God of Comics."

A licensed physician with a medical degree, Tezuka drew more than 150,000 pages of comics during his brief 60-year lifetime. Often he drew more than 300 pages a month! Partly this was accomplished by using assistants to help him shade in backgrounds and details, and partly it was accomplished by drawing in a simplified style, heavily influenced by Walt Disney and Max Fleischer.

For those of you unfamiliar with the legend of Astro Boy, he is a science fiction manga featuring a humanoid robot named Atom, who is depicted as a boy with miraculous strength of 100,000 horsepower. The setting is a future society in the 21st century. Dr. Tenma, Director General of Japan's Science Ministry, and his team create a robot on April 7, 2003, making full use of state-of-the-art technology. Dr. Tenma has lost his only son Tobio in a car accident, so he decides to make a robot that looks exactly like Tobio.

Dr. Tenma at first loves the robot as if it was his real child, but he becomes increasingly angry when the robot doesn't grow at all. Then one day, Dr. Tenma sells the poor robot to a circus troupe whose major attraction is a robot show.

The robot is named Atom and is forced to perform at the circus. But fortunately, Dr. Ochanomizu, who succeeds Dr. Tenma to head the Science Ministry, frees Atom. Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Ochanomizu, robots are given human rights and liberated at last.

Atom starts a new life in the suburbs with his parents, both of whom are also robots made by Dr. Ochanomizu. He attends a nearby elementary school and gets involved in many incidents, courageously fighting against evils to save the world.

American publishers have also issued Astro Boy comics. Western's Gold Key imprint produced a one-shot (#10151-508) in August 1965, and *March of Comics* #285; NOW Comics produced a comic, issues #1-20, from September 1987 to June 1989.

Some recent Astro Boy sales: Wooden Toy truck $195, Billiken 18 inch vinyl Doll MIB $160, a Billiken Tin Wind Up Astro Boy Robot (1999) $100, and a CGC'd Gold Key Copy of *Astro Boy* #1 $227.50 (about 1/2 NM *Guide*!).

Flash (SA)

#118	VF	$74	44%

Frontier Fighters

#1	GD+	$75	1.27X

Gay Comics

#33	VG	$8	40%

Ghosts

#3	NM	$45	90%

GI Combat

#98	FN	$28	93%
#92	FN	$22	72%
#90	FN	$41	1.14X
#89	FN	$31	86%

GI Joe

#155	NM	$45	1.9X

Giant-Size Super-Heroes

#1	NM-	$60	92%

Green Hornet

FC 496	VG	$58	90%

Hopalong Cassidy

#37	VG	$25	1.04X

House Of Secrets

#92	VG	$60	63%

Hulk

#1	FN-	$1700	89%
#2	VG+	$300	75%
#5	VG	$226	98%
#181	NM	$1100	96%

Iron Fist

#14	NM-	$125	89%

Iron Man

#1	VF-	$160	52%
#6	NM-	$48	74%

It Rhymes With Lust

#nn	FN	$275	1.5X

It's Gametime

#4	FR	$40	1.29X

Jungle

#100	VG	$55	1.15
#104	VG	$55	1.44X
#110	VG	$33	87%
#126	VG	$7	20%

Jungle Jim

#14	VG	$9	1.16X

Justice League of Am.

#21	FN	$25	26%

Justice League 3 (logo var.)

#3	NM	$30	60%

Justice Traps the Guilty

#3	GD	$16	46%

Katy Keene

#6	FN+	$75	75%

Li'l Kids

#6	FN	$20	2X
#7	FN+	$20	2X
#12	VG+	$11	1.37X

Marvel Spotlight

#5	VF	$70	72%

Metal Men

#1	VG+	$125	1.25X

Miss Fury

#3	GD+	$100	34%

Monty Hall Marines

#2	GD+	$8	1.18X

Mutt & Jeff (Cupples & Leon HC)

#13	NM	$600	1.43X

My Secret Marriage

#9	VG	$29	2.42X

Mysterious Adventures

#11	VG+	$65	90%

Nick Fury

#2	VF	$38	90%

Our Army At War

#112	VF	$255	2.48X
#113	VF	$157	1.76X
#114	NM-	$304	2.25X
#115	NM-	$199	1.24X

Outlaw Kid (2nd series)

#1	VF	$9	75%

Pinhead & Foodini

#3	GD+	$25	1.47X

Plastic Man

#14	GD+	$44	80%

Rangers Comics

#21	FN-	$100	83%

Rip Hunter

#3	VF	$140	1.27X

Saint

#1	VG	$150	99%

Sea Devils

#2	VF	$125	60%
#3	VF	$169	1.26X
#4	VF	$73	62%
#5	VF	$73	62%

Sensation Comics

#78	VG	$80	Guide

Sgt. Fury Special

#2	NM-	$44	73%

Showcase

#9	FN	$500	26%
#30	VF	$495	91%
#41	VF	$88	67%
#42	VF	$79	60%
#52	VF+	$51	96%

Silver Streak

#23	VG+	$120	1.4X

Space Family Robinson

#2	VG-	$12	50%
#3	VG	$11	65%
#9	VG	$2	14%
#12	VG	$4	43%
#13	VG	$8	80%

Spectacular Spiderman

#27	NM	$18	82%

Star Spangled War

#90	FN	$105	1.03X
#99	FN	$21	58%

Star Wars 1(variant)

#1	VG+	$100	Guide

Strange Adventures

#120	NM-	$177	55%
#126	VF+	$122	1.22X

Sub-Mariner

#27	GD+	$120	1.2X

Sub-Mariner (SA)

#1	FN+	$80	1.57X

Superboy

#89	VG	$46	67%

Superman

#141	VF	$90	83%
#144	VF	$91	83%
#145	VF	$43	39%
#149	VF	$60	50%
#207	VF	$48	1.14X
#245	VF	$39	68%

Tales Calculated To Drive You Bats

#3	NM-	$45	75%

Tales Of Suspense

#43	VG+	$65	93%
#44	VG	$65	93%

Walt Disney's C & S

#27	GD-	$115	2.5X

Wolverine

#1	NM	$15	43%

X-Men

#1	VG+	$1050	91%
#3	FN	$90	52%
#8	VF	$225	94%
#88	NM	$40	80%
#100	VF+	$85	Guide
#109	NM	$75	79%
#128	VF+	$33	1.1X
#140	NM-	$15	38%

Young Men

#25	GD-	$100	92%

Zoot

#12	VG	$90	94%

John Paul

Comic Book Expo
Wayne, NJ
Clifton, NJ
PUGPRDCTNS@AOL.COM
973-783-0608

Greetings all! My report will be a bit different than most. While I am a dealer, I also run two comic book shows here in northern New Jersey, and have been doing so for over ten years. We have a very substantial customer base, and a large number of books change hands at every show. The market is strong, and back-issue interest is very solid in our region. With a few notable exceptions, most brick-and-mortar comic shops in our area do not carry an extensive selection of older comics. This is understandable considering the cost of retail space in what is one of the most populous areas of the country. As a result, our shows have become a primary back issue source for quite a few collectors.

Since none of our regular dealers are contributors to *CBM*'s market reports, many, *many* comics are sold that slip under the radar. Being so close to NYC (and PA and CT), we get a great cross-section of the collecting population, ranging from serious fans to high-end investors to casual readers. (A few months ago, our Wayne show took place in the same hotel ballroom—barely cleaned up—that a wedding reception was held in the night before. Around noontime, a bleary-eyed fellow was shopping for low-end comics to read. He turned out to be the groom, looking "for something to do." Poor guy!)

The shows are large enough to offer something for everyone, yet not so massive that I lose personal contact with the dealers and customers. The importance of maintaining an enjoyable and friendly environment cannot be stressed strongly enough. Comics are *supposed* to be fun! Numerous veteran dealers doing my show for the first time have expressed amazement to me at how cordial both their fellow dealers and the customers are.

The sales listed below are ones that I, for one reason or another, consider to be the most noteworthy from the past month or two. They are an eclectic sampling of all dealers' activity and represent only a small fraction of the thousands of books sold. They range from Platinum Age to current, and include both table sales and prices realized in our "no minimum bid" auctions. Roughly 20% of our dealers carry CGC-graded comics in their inventory, some extensively, others just a smattering. CGC sales will be noted as such, although none were reported to me this month. It seems that many customers who frequent shows are still comfortable making their own determination regarding grade to value ratio, without the extra cost that third-party grading typically entails. However, without a doubt, some of these collectors are sending their purchases in for grading to realize a quick return on their investment.

Sales: *Action* #101 VG $225; *Adventure* #434 VF- $19; *Alien* Graphic Novel (Heavy Metal Movie Adaptation) VF/NM $15; *All-Flash* #2 GD $275; *Avengers* #4 (SA) VG $290; *Batman and the Outsiders* Complete Run Avg NM $16; *Bulletman* No # (Well Known Comics) VG/FN $65; *Captain Marvel Adventures* No # (Well Known Comics) FN $65; *Captain Rocket* #1 VG- $40; *Crisis On Infinite Earths* Set #1-12 Avg NM $25; *Crisis On Infinite Earths* Promo Poster (rolled in original plastic) NM $30; *Daredevil* #131 VG+ $40, #158 VG- $15, #168 (British Edition) FN/VF $55, #181 VF+ $42, NM- $45; *Detective* Lot Avg FN to VF #266, 299, 303, 308, 320, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 375, 392, 400, 413, 414 all for $269; *Fables* #1 VF/NM $11, NM+ $15; *Frontier Fighters* #1 GD+ $75; *GI Joe* #155 NM $45; Green Lantern Glow-In-The-Dark Promo Ring $10; *Harvey* #2 FN $15; *Heartthrobs* (DC Fireside) Hardcover w/DJ FN/VF $300; *House Of Secrets* #92 VG $60; *Incredible Hulk* #8 (Current Series) NM/MT $20; *Iron Man* #1 (SA) GD+ $35; *It Rhymes With Lust* No # FN $275; *It's Gametime* #4 FR $40; *Li'l Kids* #6 FN+ $20, #7 FN/VF $20, #12 VG/FN $11; *Mai The Psychic Girl* Complete Run (Eclipse/Viz) Avg NM $22; *Marvel Graphic Novel* #5 (X-Men "God Loves, Man Kills" 1st print) NM- $30; *Miracleman* Set #1-19, 22-24, 3-D #1 Avg NM all for $275; *Moonshadow* Complete Set (Epic/Marvel) Avg NM $25; *Mutt & Jeff* (Cupples & Leon Hardcover) #13 Unread NM- $600; *Mysterious Adventures* #11 VG+ $65; *Outlaw Kid* #1 VF $9; *Plastic Man* #14 (GA) G/VG $44; *Powers* #1/2 Gold NM $15; *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* No # (Implied to be LCE #20) GD (page torn out, but present) $50; *Silly Putty Man VS The Space Pirates* No # VF/NM $20; *Silver Streak* #23 VG/FN $120; *Superman* #3 Moderate Restoration App FN $900, #245 (DC 100 Pg SS #7) VF/NM $120; *Tales of Suspense* #43 VG+ $65, #44 VG+ $65; *2000 A.D.* (Original British Edition) Set of #1-30 Avg FN/VF $130; *Watchmen* Black Slipcased Hardcover VF/NM $150; *Uncanny X-Men* #8 VF $225, #100 VF/NM $85, #109 NM $75, #140 NM- $15.

Al Stoltz

Basement Comics
443-831-2761
Basmntcomx@aol.com

I guess this report will be a mix of local shows and Florida's Mega Con. The local scene has been steady but nothing to get anyone excited, but Mega Con was super crowded and a show building to be a powerhouse. I wrote a letter in the *CBG* about Mega Con and called it Mega Mobbed, a very appropriate title for the show this year. A great mix of buyers with want lists in hand and customers reporting comic collections for sale that we have purchased.

Silver Age comics have pressed for-

ward and still seem to sell with little work, as long as grade was better than FN+. We had little problem selling an *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 and #3 in Florida on opening day. Both comics were FN+ and had a great collectible look to them. A strange mix of Bronze and Silver Keys were sold as well at the show. *Defenders* #10, *Daredevil* #168, *Daredevil* #7, *Spider-Man* #129 and a low-grade *Tales of Suspense* #39. We also saw the usual hunger for esoteric books. We made a *Peanuts* collector very happy with some File Copies in high grade even if they were far above his normal buying limit.

Local shows also have seen a steady demand for *Amazing Spider-Man* up to the 1980s issues. A low-grade *Hulk* #1 was traded for some Golden Age comics and some *Katy Keene*s. Small collections have been surfacing at the local level—I guess the tax man needs to be fed this season.

Ebay hit an insanely slow period in February and we halted all postings for a few weeks until it seemed to pick back up. As of this writing, my *Hulk* #102 CGC-graded 9.6 with White Paper was at $1000 on eBay and has a few hours left to go even more insane. The prices paid for some of these books continues to stun even me.

With the war and terror still on many Americans minds, I guess spending money on comics and reaching back to capture dreams when times were much better is still on many buyers' to do lists.

Ron Capitini

Classic Cool Collectibles
Bruce Ellsworth
eBay id: classic-cool
972-816-7783

Will we go into Iraq? Will I sell *Amazing Spider-Man* #40? Will there be terrorist attacks? Will I sell *Fantastic Four Annual* #1? Will the war be short? Will I sell *Batman* #234? The answer before the war seemed somewhat skeptical, but the day we jumped off the fence and into a hi-tech battle, the answer has been yes, yes and yes! The flood gates were open one hour into the first strike, online eBay was lit up as we started to tear down the Saddam regime. And the online onslaught has not let up, as coalition forces tore though the cities in and around Baghdad. Sales have been *amazing* to say the least as all the doomsayers went back into their shells, yeahhhh! America, we do kick much butt.

We have sold all the above-mentioned books for *Guide* or better. Two *Spider-Man* #40 FN 5.5 $70; *Fantastic Four Annual* #1 FN 6.0 $210; *Batman* #234 VF $75. And the list goes on. With the oncoming *Hulk* movie, sales for any Hulk crossover books have been *smashing*! Sold two *Fantastic Four* #12 one GD 2.0 and the other VG 4.0 at double *Guide*, each at the Mega Con Orlando. *Fantastic Four* #25 FN $160 and *Fantastic Four* #112 VF/NM $125—to which I add, *unslabbed* on top of online! Who could have known—"Hulk good for economy."

The ongoing effort to pick up scarce and key books marches on, as the Golden Age *Kid Comics* #3 sold in FR/GD for $105; *Tales to Astonish* #1 continues to astonish at *Guide*-and-a-half for FN 6.0 at $500. Bronze Age is picking up speed as many of the discontinued runs of *Warlock*, *Conan*, *Marvel Special Edition* and *Spidey Super Stories* are bringing in dead-on *Guide* prices.

All is well after a slow start before the war to brisk sales after the ongoing conflict and many collectors and the economy gaining confidence to which I must say Godspeed to our troops—Thank you for preserving our freedoms to read and collect, because without them this would not be possible.

Bruce Edwards

Quasar Comics and Collectibles
www.QuasarComics.com
PO Box 2227
Louisville, KY 40201
502-451-4852

The market is rather interesting in this day and age. Lately I have been selling only on eBay as I focus on getting some long delayed stuff finished up so work can seriously start on our next massive "Fantastic Mail Bid Sale" which will be #24. Details on eBay results shortly, but first a little diversion:

A lot of coverage goes to the few big name auctions that are in fact doing very well for their owners. This speaks both to the health of the high-end market and to the "for better or worse" new money of relatively unknowledgeable investors that are attracted to the third party CGC stamp of approval. This is all fine and proper, I do firmly believe that the buyer must do his or her homework and be educated about their pursuits.

What about auctions focused on the backbone of our hobby, the true comic book collector? These have been fairly rare of late (although I hope to do something about that this year) except for eBay. Some have a hard time believing this, but a very large number of collectors are on the sidelines because they do not and will not participate in an Internet auction such as eBay and are turned off or feel intimidated (really!) by the slick professional production of the big names. I am simply stating this as an observation of an underserved market segment, do with it what you will.

O.K. Back to the market report. Ebay does from tolerable to very well for sellers who provide good descriptions and, especially, high quality large images of what they are selling, so long as it is not an area of the market in oversupply (most comics from the 1970s to date, with some notable exceptions, of course). I post all of my auctions with low starting bids and a buy it now option that is any where from 70% to slightly above *Guide*. A good 20-30% of my lots generally sell "buy it now."

Here are some **recent sales** that include some great bargains and some over *Guide* prices: *Air Ace* V3 #1 Dec 1945 Nice FN- $11; *Stereotype* FC $15.50; *Approved Comics* #6 Daring Adventure VF 8.0 (Baker!) $15.94; *Black Rider* #14 May 1951 VG+ (Atlas Western!) $6.50; *Captain Marvel Adv.* #126 PR (reading copy) $4.95; *Captain Marvel, Jr.* #36 March 1946 FA (reading

copy) $27.57; *Cindy* #31 Oct 1948 VG/F (Kurtzman, more!) $12; *Crime Does Not Pay* #56 VG (electric chair, blood) $11.51, #66 VG+ (buried alive, more!) $5.95; *Fighting Leathernecks* #6 PR (Pin-ups galore!) $19.95; *Frankie and Lana* #13 VG+ (anti-Wertham!) $24.95; *Gay Comics* #33 VG+ (Kurtzman, Namora, Venus, more) $7.95; *Georgie Comics* #7 1946 PR (Timely teen comic!) $39.95; *Jungle* #100 G/VG (blood, GGA, bondage) $54.95, #104 VG+ (GGA, bondage, torture) $18.50, #110 VG/F(GGA, more!) $33.34, #126 VG 4.0 (bondage, GGA, more) $7.25; *Jungle Jim* #14 1949 Standard Comics VG+ (GGA) $9.38; *Monty Hall Marines* #2 GVG (GGA Betty Page swipe!) $8.27; *My Secret Marriage* #9 VG+ (weekend wife, more!) $27.80; *Pinhead and Foodini* #3 Nov 1951 GD (photo-c) $25; *Rusty* #20 1949 VGF (Kurtzman-5 pages!) $1.95; *Space Family Robinson* #12 VG- $4.25, #13 VG- $7.95, #16 VG+ $3.25, #2 VG $11.99, #3 VG $10.50, #9 VG/F $1.95, #28 VG/F $1.95, #29 VG $26, #30-34 $1.95, #35 VG $10.50, #36 VG $9.95; *Superboy* #89 G/VG (1st Mon-el, 2nd Phantom Zone) $45.44; *WDC&S* #27 Dec 1942 GD- $115.50, #39 Dec 1943 G/VG $6; *Whack* #3 May 1954 VGF (*MAD*-style fun!) $9.53; *Wilbur* #16 Dec 1947 FA/GD.

Jamie Newbold

Southern California Comics
8280 Clairemont Mesa Blvd. Suite #124
San Diego, CA. 92111
858-715-8669
www.socalcomics.com

It feels like spring and the beginning of comic conventions season. We attended the Creation Con in Pasadena last month. Disappointed by the low attendance and high admission cost; surprised by the wealth of comic book creator talent unencumbered by long lines of fans. On a more pleasing note, some local comic art enthusiasts got together last month at a local sports bar and initiated the first meeting of its kind here in town. The bar was kind enough to set an area aside for us as so we could format a meeting atmosphere. Various art collectors met and shared selections of artwork we have collected. Local celeb Scott Dunbier from WildStorm Studios was kind enough to bring samples of his collection for show-and-tell. This seemed like the right way to go about forming a monthly comic art gathering. Thanks to Tony Marino for being the motivator for this first meeting.

Silver Age Marvels sell extremely well for us in any given quarter. This last 3-month period they went through the roof! We sold many Marvels, key and non-key. We sold all grades, with and without discounts. We sold everything on eBay, through the mail and through our store. We sold them for varying reasons—from scarcity of a particular issue here in San Diego, to investment potential, to filling a run. Some collectors purchased comics they owned once before. Others bought Marvels from the 1960s to complement their interest in the movies plowing their way through American pop culture. The typical Silver Age collector is still 99% male. At our store we see the collectors, as opposed to the faceless online experience. I see that the age group for Silver Age Marvel collectors continues to expand to the current generation of college age people. With a cross-generational interest group covering 30 years it's no wonder we see old Marvels sell so well.

GOLDEN AGE SALES: *Air Fighters* #5 G/VG $142; *America's Best Comics* #13 VG- $90; *Black Knight* #2 FN $180; *Blue Beetle* #33 VG $54; *Detective* #166 FN $165; *Hopalong Cassidy* #37 VG/F $25; *Katy Keene* #6 F/VF $75; *Miss Fury* #3 FA/GD $100; *Rangers Comics* #21 VG/F $100; *Saint* #1 VG $150; *Sensation Comics* #78 VG $80; *Submariner* #27 GD $120; *Walt Disney Summer Fun* #2 VF/CGC 8.0 $100; *Young Men* #25 FA/GD $100; *Zoot* #12 VG $90.

SILVER AGE SALES: *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 VG+ $1800, #4 VG/F $410, #6 VG+ $265, 38 FN $244, #9 VG/F $200, #9 FN $264, #17 FN+ $245, #18 FN+ $169, #23 F/VF $205, #32 VF CGC 8.0 $175, #38 VF+ CGC 8.5 $225, #50 FN $150; *Batman* #117 F/VF $170; *Bullwinkle* #01-090-209 F/VF $80; *Captain Atom* #89 VF- $29; *Daredevil* #5 VF $140, #6 VF- $90; *Fantastic Four* #1 VG CGC 4.0 $1620; *Green Hornet FC* #496 VG/F $58; *Hulk* #2 VG+ $300, #4 FN+ $400, #5 VG $226, #1 FN- $1700; *Iron Man* #1 F/VF $160, #6 NM- $48; *Metal Men* #1 VG/F $125; *Nick Fury* #2 VF $38; *Sgt. Fury Annual* #2 NM- $44; *Submariner* #1 F/VF $80; *Tales Calculated To Drive You Bats* #3 NM- $45; *X-Men* #1 VG+ $1050, #3 FN $90, #3 FN+ $200, #4 F/VF $260.

BRONZE AGE SALES: *Amazing Spider-Man* #129 VF $129; *Daredevil* #168 NM $65; *Detective* #415 NM- $35, #440 NM- $55; *Ghosts* #3 NM $45; *Giant-Size Super-Heroes* #1 NM- $60; *Incredible Hulk* #181 NM- $1100; *Iron Fist* #14 NM- $125; *Justice League* #3 (logo variant) NM $30; *Marvel Spotlight* #5 VF $70; *Spectacular Spider-Man* #27 NM $18; *Star Wars* #1(variant) VG+ $100; *Uncanny X-Men* #88 NM- $40, #89 NM $40, #128 VF+ $33, #130 VF $28, #132 NM- $32, #266 VF $26; *Wolverine* (1982) #1 NM $15.

Robert Letscher II

Key Comics
1318 N Emerson
Mesa, AZ 85201
Phone: 480-890-0055
eBay ID: KeyComics@hotmail.com

The *Daredevil* movie has definitely benefited the back issues, with Hornhead's books selling briskly. The issues with Kingpin and Elektra are especially hot, but the Bullseye appearances are blazing hot: I just got $80 on eBay for a mere FN/VF copy of *DD* #131, which wouldn't have commanded a ten spot last fall! Naturally, people are paying crazy amounts for top copies, especially for the #131, also for such keys as issue 1, 16 (with Spidey) and 168 (Elektra).

By the time you read this, similar interest will probably be found on the *X-Men* and *Hulk* books, which are heating

up nicely, as their movies are rapidly approaching. Spidey sales continue their roll, begun with the record-setting movie last year.

Seventies comics in general continue to heat up, with Marvel leading the way. High-grade Silver and Bronze Age Marvels continue to set records, as prices spiral upward each month. Demand far exceeds supply in the highest grades. And there's plenty of demand in the other grades, too, albeit at reasonable prices. There are still plenty of bargains to be found on mid-grade books, for those who search around and have a little patience.

I was disappointed to see that the forum about the grading service's grading was not to be published in *CBM*. The views of over 30 dealers and collectors would have been interesting to see. Seems to me that if ever there was just cause for such an open and civilized exchange of views, it would be with such a company, which enjoys a monopoly situation and is completely unchecked, and can charge more if it deems a book to be the next higher grade, and thus a higher value. I continue to hear tales of CGC-graded books that are cracked out of the cases, only to come back at a different grade, sometimes by two or three grading increments. That is downright scary.

Comic book art continues to set records, and I'm still picking my jaw up off the floor from when the John Byrne 2-page spread from *X-Men* #137 broke the $50K barrier at the recent Heritage auction.

Ebay is a great way to shift off the TV/movie titles, which had been sluggish on the convention circuit, as well is through traditional comic mail order ads and catalogs. Fans from outside the comic hobby often don't mind paying $20 for a book spotlighting a favorite cartoon character or western drama, or with a photo of a top classic-movie actor on the front cover, even if it's a VG that only *Guide*s for $10. By the same token, collectors and buyers alike can find items they didn't even know existed, with a simple search, so it's made collecting more convenient for fans worldwide.

The recent developments in Iraq, coupled with the soft economy, have some fans preoccupied with other affairs, so sales are off a little in general. I have also noticed more fans showing interest in trading to fill their comic fix, rather than spending the coveted cash. (That's fine with me, as I always love to get more old comics and art!)

Here are some of the sales from recent weeks, starting with a few "**slabbed books**": *Liberty Comics* #10 CGC VF/NM 9.0 Double Cover $265; *X-Men* #110 CGC NM 9.4 $70, #129 CGC NM 9.4 $80, #172 CGC NM/MT 9.8 $70; *Spider-Man/Black Cat* #1 CGC NM/MT 9.8 $35.

Here's a few *unslabbed* copies: *Amazing Spider-Man* #113 NM- $33, #114 VF- $20, #120 VF- $30; *Daredevil* #100 VF- $30; *Showcase* #52 VF/NM Double Cover $51.

Sales of DC cover **production art** from the Jack Adler Collection continues unabated: *All-Star Western* #1 Four-Color Separation $200; *Our Fighting Forces* #126 Approval Cover $120; *Strange Adventures* #241 Four-Color Separation $150; *Superboy* #194 Acetate Four-Color Separation $180; *Phantom Stranger* #25 Four-Color Separation $160; *Star Spangled War Stories* #148 Approval Cover $130; *Justice League Of America* #112 Hand-Colored Cover $220; *Superboy* #178 Approval Cover $160. Trade: *Jimmy Olsen* #158 Hand-Colored Cover $170.

I anticipate a strong spring, with an even stronger summer. It is a great time to be in the hobby, as a buyer, seller, or trader!

Doug Sulipa

Comic World
Box 21986
Steinbach, MB Canada R5G 1B5
cworld@mts.net
Phone: 204-346-3674
Fax: 204-346-1632

After a short post-Christmas lull, we had a huge comeback with a booming February and March. Ebay has been slow, so we have concentrated on adding yet more items to our website. Buyers love it and have kept us hopping. Endless buyers are finding anything and everything, including many things we forgot we had. Many people were filling in holes in their various series, but still especially Marvel and DC comics of the 1968-1976 era. Our bestsellers in the last couple months were: Dell (especially *Four Color*), Archies (1960-1975 era), Harvey (1960s), Classics Illustrated, cartoon paperbacks and vintage wrestling magazines. *Betty & Veronica* are the most requested Archies of late. Harvey Giants, *Hot Stuff* and *Blondie* have especially pick up in demand.

We had almost sold out most of our line-drawn cover issues of Classics, but managed to get a large Classics collection, and many more found good homes with true fans. The LDC issues remain quite a bargain, for comics of their respective vintage. *Archie Giant Series Magazine* #26 (6/64) "Betty & Veronica Spectacular" is an unlisted Classic *all pin-up* issue, with DeCarlo art, and remains very under-valued and a harder issue to locate. *Blondie* and *Dagwood* comics remain one of the biggest bargains of all 1950s and 1960s comics, which probably explains the recent increase in demand.

I have always believed that *any* long-running character, especially one known around the world like this, will always be a safe and solid long-term investment. Dell *Tarzan* has been a top seller in the last few months and, as one of the most recognized characters in history, remains affordable and undervalued. We listed and sold many copies of *Career Girl Romances* #39 (4/1967) as 1st App "Tiffany Sinn, C.I.A. Sweetheart, Undercover Agent"-c/s, 8pgs, Art by Luis Dominguel, next appears in *Secret Agent* (formerly *Sarge Steel*) #10. Original Canadian "Whites" of the 1942-1946 era (B&W Golden Age comics) have relentless demand and virtually no supply. Nothing is hotter or more requested at this time.

Old Canadian price guides are worth-

less in the current market. The average VG comic that sold for under $20 in 1996 flies out the door in the $100 each average range. Number 1s start at $200 and up. Nelvanna of the Northern Lights is the most requested character. Other very hot titles include; *Active Comics*, *Better Comics*, *Bing Bang*, *Dime Comics*, *Freelance*, *Funny Comics*, *Robin Hood*, *Triumph Comics* and *Wow Comics*.

The Fawcett character titles are Red Hot, (they sported *new* art, re-drawn by Canadian artists) such as: *Captain Marvel Comics*, *Grand Slam*, *Spy Smasher*, *Three Aces* and *Whiz Comics*. I could sell a lot of these fast and furious—if I could just find them. Anyone selling? If you are not already into collecting these rare comics, it is probably too late to begin, as competition is very heavy.

Also Red Hot is the ultra-rare EC comic hybrid title *Weird SuspenStories*. Knowing both the buyer and seller, I witnessed a VG+ copy of #3 sell on eBay for US $1825. That is another record and this title will continue to amaze, because many consider them the rarest of all EC comics.

For the first time in many years, everything uncommon and related to *Captain Canuck* has been selling very well. This started to happen right after we added the info to our website, so many buyers were looking and have now found us. I now know another owner of one of the rare copies of #4, the second printing with only 15 issues originally published. That brings the known copies that have surfaced to four in the last seven years or so. All the original art to the entire original series of *Captain Canuck* was donated to the Canadian Archives and none is on the market. We located some odd unpublished and promo art pieces, mostly by Richard Comely, and have already sold a few. We also sold items like portfolios, posters, patches, cards, buttons, etc. The Richard Comely post-Canuck B&W mag *Star Rider & the Peace Machine* #1, 2 was almost forgotten, but we have even sold a few sets of these.

Pulp magazines have been selling quite well lately. But many would find it strange that the science fiction titles have been the slowest issues. We have sold a lot of western and mystery titles, plus are now almost sold out of both *Blue Book* and *Adventure*. Especially hot are any pulp by Louis L'Amour and his pseudonym Jim Mayo, in the $20-$50 each range. All non-science fiction stories by L. Ron Hubbard are currently very hot. We have also sold a lot of issues of *Argosy*, but still have a good stock. The affordability is making these traditionally slower titles more desirable. I have found resistance to ERB pulps and most priced at over $75.

All affordable horror comics are selling well. Even the dormant ACG titles have been moving well lately, but especially the 10-cent issues. Warren buyers come to us regularly and have made Warren one of the main publishers for completionists. The most requested issue is *Heidi Saha*, which rarely shows up in any grade. In particular, many are trying to finish off their *Eerie* and *Creepy* sets. *Blazing Combat* #1, *Creepy* #9 and *Eerie* #17 have huge demand and you can expect an explosion in price in the future, especially once CGC starts to grade mags.

The 1970s Marvel mags in VF/NM and up are suddenly in big demand, again due to anticipation of CGC grading. *Dracula Lives* #1 is easily three times scarcer than *Tomb of Dracula* #1, and scarcer in high grade, yet lists at 36% of the value in Guide. Buy 1970s Marvel mags now, remember you were warned here.

I have tried to convince Bob Overstreet to list *National Lampoon*, *Help!* magazine (Warren) and *Heavy Metal* in the annual *Guide*, but he continues to decline to list them. All are solid good sellers and all are loaded with great stories and art. *National Lampoon* has especially picked up in demand, with #1-20 (1970 & 1971) being difficult to keep in stock. Number 34 (1/73) "Buy this Magazine, or we will shoot this Dog," is the hottest and most requested issue—we sold our last VF copy for $30. *National Lampoon* contains art by Wrightson, Barry Smith, Frazetta, Neal Adams, Jeff Jones, Kaluta, Bode, Gahan Wilson, Arnold Roth, Gray Morrow and many others. *National Lampoon* has endless amazing parodies and is one of the rudest and funniest mags of all time. Too bad the *Guide* will not let more collectors be aware of what they are missing. The good news is that even the best issues remain affordable to almost anyone. We sold a lot of them, simply by adding a detailed listing to our website. I catalogued my scarce Whitman Pre-Pack only comics of the 8-12/1980 era and sold about 50 of our 100 available in a six-month period. My minimum price is $10 for a VG copy on anything in this era. These remain perhaps the scarcest of all post-1960 comics and are still quite undervalued.

We got in a huge batch of CGC-graded comics and they still sell quite well. I have noticed that eBay prices are down on many and it can be risky to sell them on eBay. Luckily we have an established group of good buyers and we sold 1/3 of them off-eBay to buyers willing to pay a fair price. I think this will happen more and more. I now know of several buyers who first offer their best issues to established buyers and then put their leftovers on eBay. So I would not judge current values too much by current eBay results. I have now elected to instead list my better CGC-graded comics on my website and plan to keep building my selection. I have found 1975 and newer issues in 9.4 have slowed, as most buyers now want 9.6 and 9.8 copies. 1960-1974 issues in 9.0 and 9.2 have slowed too and are currently a bargain.

As in most years, we have had a last minute rush of buyers trying to snap up "buys" before the release of the new *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* .The biggest question that remains is how he will handle the values of 9.0 VF/NM and better comics. The person who believes that an *Action* #1 in 9.4 is worth only $350,000 stands to lose about a million dollars. Users are misinformed if they believe *Amazing Fantasy* #15 is worth only $42,000 in 9.4 NM.

Apparently a new magazine will be coming out to address the 9.0 and better market. But the problem remains. It needs to be dealt with in the new annual *Guide* too. Restored comics also need to have definitive values assigned. Strangely,

restored comic sales have greatly increased and I have sold almost all in stock! I have found that pro-restored apparent VF Marvel Keys sell fast at VG prices. I recently sold *Hulk* #1, *JLA* #1, *DD* #1, *Spidey* #4, *FF* #1 and others. In several cases the books priced out at less than what the restoration would have cost. (Many restoration jobs cost in the $500-$700 range.) Due to the current fear of restored comics and cost to restore, it is unlikely many more books will have work done on them for a while.

Peanuts Collectors ALERT: We got in and instantly sold a set of *Fritzi Ritz* for the *Peanuts* strips, which are among the earliest Charles Schulz in comics. Much is *not* yet listed in *Overstreet*. *Peanuts* has been quite hot for about two years now and collectors have extended to these more obscure appearances. Collectors will be glad to know, I kept all this important information: *Fritzi Ritz* (United Feature Syndicate): #27, 30-32 ALL have 3 pages early *Peanuts* by Schulz each; #28 2 pages early *Peanuts* by Schulz; #29, 33 1-page early *Peanuts* by Schulz, #32-36 all have *L'il Abner*; (#35, Wolf Gal app); #34-36 confirmed NO *Peanuts*; *Fritzi Ritz* (St. John): #37-49, 50 (1/57) ALL have 3 pages early *Peanuts* by Schulz each, #37 (4 pages *Peanuts*); #51-54, confirmed NO *Peanuts*; #55 No *Peanuts*?; #38 (9/55), 39 (1/56), 40 (2/56), 41 (4/56)-YES these exist; #39-42 (5/56), 49-51 states on cover "Re-issue of Originals"; *Fritzi Ritz* (Dell): #56 confirmed NO *Peanuts*! #57-59 all confirmed to have 3 pages *Peanuts* by Schulz.

Greg White

Comics & Collectibles
Kissimmee, Florida
wemisswalt@aol.com

Hello from Central Florida. We are getting into our late winter groove. First quarter sales at the store were average. We held our own but did not set any records. Considering the fact that another long-standing store goes out of business in Orlando next week we are thankful to be having a decent year. It is certainly a challenge to run a successful over the counter retail shop in the face of increasing Internet competition and a generally fickle buying public.

Quality conventions are few and far between. The collector crowd is dollar poor and few large sales (over $1000) take place. Many collectors are filling their needs over the Internet nowadays and no longer feel the need to attend local shows. The over the counter retail business is forever changing. Many stores will not survive. Internet sales at close to retail price would be fine; however, that is usually not the case.

For the most part the Internet mindset is that of a flea market and collectors expect huge discounts. Not good if a dealer has paid a fair price for a collection and is looking to make a reasonable markup. The next few years will be interesting.

SILVER AGE: The store has picked up many collections this winter but sales have been stagnant. A few high-grade Marvels have sold. High-grade keys always seem to be in demand—however often times when I produce the book the collector will not pay retail for it. Certain DC titles remain popular (*Brave & Bold*, *Superman*, *Showcase*) but most are slow. Non-Marvel and DC Silver Age remain stagnant, especially at *Guide* prices. I bought a terrific group of high-grade Archies from the 1950s. Many VF/NM books—lets see how they sell.

Recent Sales: *Amazing Spider-Man* #40 VF/NM $280; *Batman Annual* #1 VG $85; *Brave & Bold* #28 GD $175; *Fantastic Four* #25 NM $250.

GOLDEN AGE: We have moved a few early *World's Finest* this month. Most sold below *Guide*. Many of the longstanding DC gold books will sell at 20%-40% below *Guide*. I just have trouble getting full *Guide* for most books from this period. The overall prices in the *Guide* need to be adjusted. Exceptions would be WW II covers and classic art covers.

Recent Sales: *World's Finest* #7 VG $400; *Jungle* #29 VF/NM $400; *Batman* #19 FN $225; *Archie Annual* #1 GD $125; *Marvel Mystery* #48 GD $100.

ORIGINAL ART & TOYS: We continue to have demand for Captain Action toys, Aurora kits, TV board games and vintage bubble gum cards. It would be nice to get in a large collection to restock.

Recent Sales: Win Mortimer daily strip $35; Samm Schwartz *Archie* page $270, *Spider-Man* daily strip $250, Dean Morrisy oil painting $2500, built-up Aurora Batman kit $75.

When visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello. See you in thirty!

Steve Wyatt

Super Con
supercon@winfirst.com

Hello everyone, slow month for me this time, not that many shows. There were a few notable sales though, I sold a *Hulk* #181 in only VG- for $250 (the other dealer buying it made the offer), an *X-Men* #1 in VG+ for $1300. I just sold three books on eBay that were CGC-graded: *X-Men* #6 8.0 $237, #7 9.0 $571, #8 9.2 $650.

Silver Age has been steady for the "highest" grade and the very low-grade, and Bronze seems to be picking up momentum. My next show is Wonder-Con, were I will be premiering a new collection with over 10 long boxes of high-grade Marvels and DC (mostly Silver Age, about 50%, and Bronze, another 30%) and over 300 CGC-graded books. I will be preparing a large market report then. I have multiple copies of 12-cent Marvels (starting with 8 copies of *X-Men* #10)—6 long boxes with all the books being Fine or better (lots of VFs or more). I will be tracking a lot of the sales just so I can write it up. There are also long boxes of high-grade Charltons, Gold Keys and most of the '60s books. If you get a chance to come by at Wonder-Con, I have three booths, you can't miss it. Till next month.

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

Inspiration Central

[continued from page 16]

Moore, Bob Clampett, Tex Avery, and particularly the stuff that Preston Blair did for Avery's cartoons. I think it's important as an artist not to just have your influences in the medium that you're practicing in, but also to go beyond.

J.C. Leyendecker was also a big influence. And now, as an adult, I'm discovering more and more every day. I think there are people I probably dismissed as a kid, but now I'm looking back and discovering, "Wow, this guy was really great." Andrew Loomis, John Lagatta, George Petty, Gil Elvgren, most of the great pin up artists. I don't know if they were really big influences on me as a young man, but as I grew older, more and more they're people whose work I just really respect and admire.

Also, this may be a little out of context with the discussion, but I find it fascinating that as an adult you can look back at artists that you thought were just really crappy when you were a kid, and realize, "Wow, this guy was just brilliant. This guy was really great!" I think of Frank Robbins. I remember being a kid, and he worked on *The Invaders* for a while, and before that he did some Batman stories. He did the original Manbat story. And I just thought, "Man, this guy is *horrible*!" I just could not stand his work at all. Now I look at it and I realize that he came from the Milton Caniff school that I really love, and he was great. [General laughter] His stuff was brilliant. But, you know, when you're a kid and you're turned on by Neal Adams, you look at someone like Frank Robbins, you just go, "Blech!"

It's really important to honor and acknowledge those guys and to think about what you say when somebody asks you whether you like this guy or not. Because ten years from now, somebody that you dismissed, or just thought was horrible, you might look at their work and just be blown away by it. In another twenty or thirty years you may look back and say, "You know, Bill Morrison's art wasn't so bad after all!"

Greatest Comic Book Ever

[continued from page 17]

and the violence, this comic somehow was my perfect escape. It took me away from the hospital, away from the uncertainty and my fears, and it delivered me to a fantasy world that freshened my whole perspective. What started out as the first worst night of my life (subsequent bad nights topped it, but this one set the benchmark) turned out to be strangely soothing because of this one Dracula comic book.

I kept this all to myself. Even when Mom breezed through surgery, recovered and returned home, I never said a word. Maybe I couldn't—perhaps I was too young to articulate or even fully comprehend what had happened. But looking back, I think it's no coincidence that *Tomb of Dracula* subsequently became one of my all-time favorite comics series, and no matter how many comics I've sold off over the years, I've never parted with *TOD* #2. It's in a box beside my desk right now.

Certainly, I've owned more significant comics. *Silver Surfer* #1, the death of Gwen Stacy, *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, the first Frank Miller *Daredevil*s—I bought all of these off the same spinner at LaVerdiere's—yet not one of them remains with me today. Sold them off years ago, when their sentimental value expired.

But *Tomb of Dracula* #2 stays. To most collectors, it's a forgettable issue—a minor story en route to the major milestones that come later in *TOD*'s remarkable 70-issue lifespan. Yet to me this comic represents something else. It's a reminder of, as the title says, "The Fear Within"—of the night I feared for Mom's life, and of how this one simple comic book gave me comfort.

"Greatest Comic Book Ever?" To me, there is no challenger.

Postscript:
I started collecting original comic book artwork four years ago, and one of my first objectives was to obtain a representative page from *Tomb of Dracula*. Imagine my delight when that acquisition turned out to be from *TOD* #2!

The story gets better: Subsequently, I've managed to beg, buy and be gifted with all 21 pages to that issue. So, yes, today I'm humbly privileged to be the sole caretaker of the complete artwork of *Tomb of Dracula* #2. And I've got kind folks such as Kelly Borkert, Mike Burkey, Rich Donnelly and, above all, my dear friends Adrienne and Gene Colan to thank for it.

The story gets worse: Mom was diagnosed with advanced cancer this past year, and at the time the prognosis was grim. I realized then that I'd never told her the story-behind-the-story of *TOD* #2, and that now might not just be my best opportunity; it might be my only one. So, I gathered up my copy of *TOD* #2, my portfolio of original artwork, and determined that next time I saw Mom, I'd tell her everything.

The story gets better again: following aggressive treatment, Mom is now in remission. The doctors say her cancer levels are lower than normal, and she feels great. About a month ago, I finally had that chance to tell her the whole, long story about that comic and that night. To me, it was a huge emotional purging that frankly required a great deal of self-control to keep gushing tears and wracking sobs in check. To her? Well, she nodded, smiled, flipped through the pages a bit, but really didn't say anything. Remember my family's need-to-know approach? Some things don't change.

But I've changed. Thirty years ago, I didn't know how to read the silence, so it scared me. Today, I read tight lips pretty well, and what I heard in Mom's silence—let's just say it told me what I needed to hear.

Tom Field, 39, is an award-winning writer whose work has appeared in Everything from Beavis and Butthead *comics to* Yankee *magazine. A lifelong comics fan, Field shares Jack Kirby's birthday: August 28. He lives with his wife and two children in rural NH.*

Marketplace Mail

[continued from page 57]
by readers has been so strong that we won't ever do that again! Seriously, the letters are one of my favorite parts of each issue. So write!

RC

$5.95—Cheap!

I am very upset that I had to buy three issues of *CBM* in order to read the interview with George Perez. It should have been placed in one magazine. That seems like a cheap trick to buy multiple issues.

Tracy Le Veaux
Las Vegas, NV

Don't you mean "a cheap trick to SELL multiple issues"? Well, our "cheap trick" didn't work! Actually, the Perez interview was one of the first things dumped on my desk when I took over the CBM *helm, and only too late did I realize that it was much too long for a single issue. Hopefully, we won't make that mistake again! Our new "cheap trick to sell more magazines" is the expanded 16-page color section and the constantly-improving editorial quality of* CBM*!*

RC

Gabby palaverin'

I was really pleased to see your January issue of *CBM* with its western tribute theme and your editorial brought a fond smile to my lips as I recalled my own childhood infatuation with all things cowboy.

I too was born in 1937 and I can remember the forties serials with Buck Jones and his ilk as well as the great western magazines, and then in the fifties, the appearance of the wonderful comics. I was a fully paid up member of the Roy Rogers Fan Club, too, complete with ID card and genuine leather wallet.

I trailed all the exciting TV westerns through the fifties and sixties: *Broncho*, *Sugarfoot*, *Virginian*, *Cheyenne*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *Wanted*. Roy. Gene. It was an age when cowboys were king. Now, sadly, there's nothing.

I caught the excellent series of *Lonesome Dove* a few years back and thoroughly enjoyed it. But it was the exception that proves the rule. Westerns are no more.

So, as I said, when I saw your tribute issue I was overwhelmed and it was a cracking read, too, bringing back many memories of dusty days on the trail with a whole host of lightning fast gunhawks.

But I was really disappointed not to find any reference—apart from one tiddly mention on page 16—about my personal favorite western artist, Joe Maneely. His artwork leapt from the page and made you feel the sweat and heat of the west, the tension and blood of every gunfight. Alongside John Severin, I think Maneely was probably the most influential western artist in comics and I still have a few dog-eared copies of his work from my childhood and I still get a kick out of looking at them. Unfortunately, back issues of his work are few and far between and prices not a little steep for my wallet. Still, nothing compares to the pleasure when I occasionally come across a back issue of *Kid Colt* or *Ringo Kid* at some mart and I get to hold such a rare treasure in my hands again if only for a moment.

Any chance of you doing a glance back at Joe's work in some future issue, perhaps concentrating on his work for Atlas comics?

Meanwhile, once again, I thank you for issue 98 and its wonderful trip down memory lane to a time before anti-heroes and cynicism.

Westward ho, brothers. Head 'em up, move 'em out.

Keep riding' the range, pardner. There's still a few of us ol' cowpokes left in the saddle. Once I used to laugh at the antics of Gabby Hayes. Now, goldurn it, I look like him!

Alan Booth
England

Alan, you say you look like Gabby Hayes? Me, too! How about a Gabby Hayes Look-Alike Contest for all us old codgers who are past retirement age? These ding-blasted young whippersnappers would never stand still for such foolishness! We agree that Joe Maneely deserves an article in CBM*. Who wants to write this article for us?*

RC

Scope and focus

As long as your magazine focuses on Golden Age, Atomic Age and Silver Age then "I'll be your man" for life! I like more info on original comic book art—that's fine; and articles on "the market," "grading," collectors and collecting, social, cultural, historical implications etc. etc. all great!

But stay away pretty much from all the fringe areas like new comics, toys, strips, movies, TV, etc. please. The reason I love *CBM* is because it's the only mag that does inform us all about what we care about most—the love of old, collectable, readable, investment potential comic books!

Always look forward to Nolan and Pat's columns. I wish the whole mag was more or less filled with these kind of articles plus in depths and market analysis. So I will give *CBM* another shot. If I see you guys are straying away into areas of concern I will be forced to drop *CBM*. I want to see *CBM* as an education publication concerning research in all aspects of collecting "old comic books."

Stephen B. Keisman
Pembroke Pines, FL

To me, the key word in your first line is "focus." We will continue to focus on comic books, primarily Golden and Silver Age; that will be our main thrust. But an article every now and then about new comics, toys, strips, etc., should add a bit of flavor that, to me and many other readers, doesn't seem out of place in CBM*. Anyone reading these letters can quickly see that there is no earthly way to accommodate the wishes of all our readers, so we have to try to strike a happy medium in each issue, and I, for one, think we have been doing a pretty good job of that! So, stick with us as we try to grow and branch out a bit as we continue to dance with the one who brought us to the dance in the first place.*

RC

'48

by Michelle Nolan

The Boom Began for Dell Comics and Superman

In 1948, the Golden Age of most super-hero comics was near its end, but the Gilded Age of Dell Comics and DC's Superman franchise was only just beginning.

A case could be made, however, that the most important comic books to be introduced in 1948 were the first issues of ACG's *Adventures into the Unknown* and EC's *War Against Crime* and *Crime Patrol*. They truly marked the beginning of the end of the garish and the gory in the world of American comic books.

Adventures Into the Unknown #1 (Fall 1948) began the first regularly published series of horror comics, though the supernatural products of the prolific ACG editor Richard Hughes were never even close to being the most notorious in the field. *AITU*, though, began a short but infamously devastating trend—one that essentially lasted only six years (1949-54) out of the first four decades or so of American newsstand comics.

Likewise, the corresponding era of crime comics in reality lasted only a year or two more than the horror comics period, even though the first "modern" crime comic was Lev Gleason's *Crime Does Not Pay* #22 in 1942. Gleason had little crime comics competition until a handful of other crime titles began to pop up in the post-war years, including Gleason's own *Crime and Punishment* #1 (Apr 1948).

Produced primarily by Charles Biro and Bob Wood, *Crime Does Not Pay* was touting "more than 6,000,000 readers monthly" at the top of the cover by the end of 1947, making it appear that crime paid very well, indeed, for Gleason's small but high-quality comic book company.

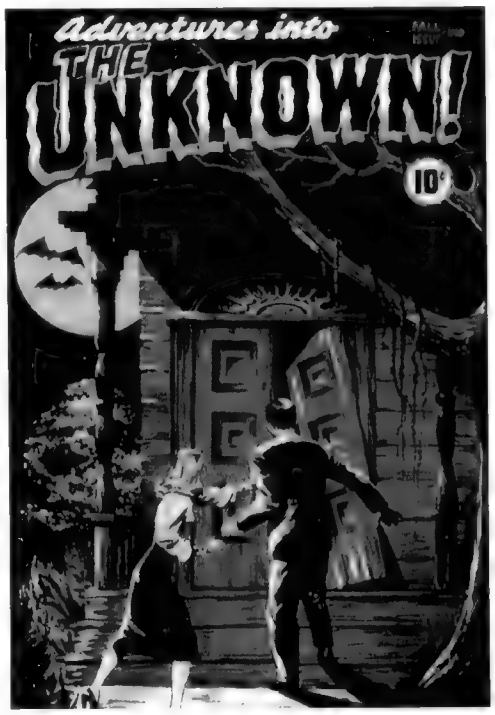
The title never really sold six million copies, of course, but that boast was nonetheless based on the fact that *Crime Does Not Pay* was surely one of the top-selling comic books of 1948, with well over a million copies purchased of every issue. It was commonly believed that "pass-around" readership produced a multiplier of anywhere from three to six readers per the most popular comic books sold—especially in an era when a dime was every bit a youngster's equivalent of a buck or two today.

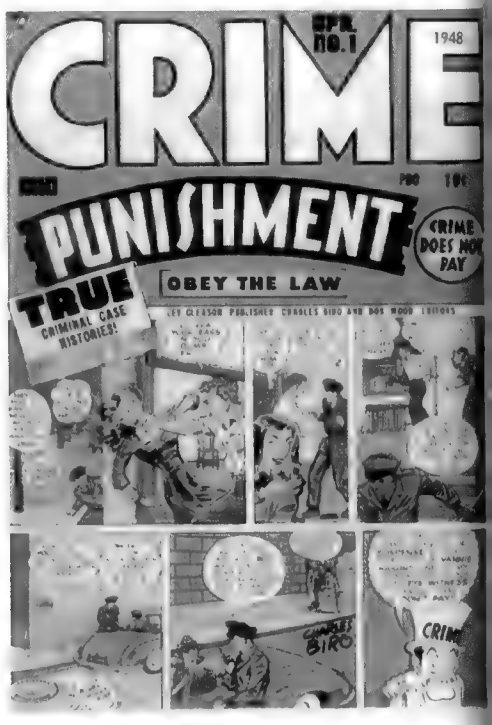
Even so, EC's two pre-trend crime titles, which debuted in 1948, ultimately caused even more commotion in the comic book world, if only because *War Against Crime* #1 and *Crime Patrol* #7 paved the way of the introduction of the EC horror titles two years later.

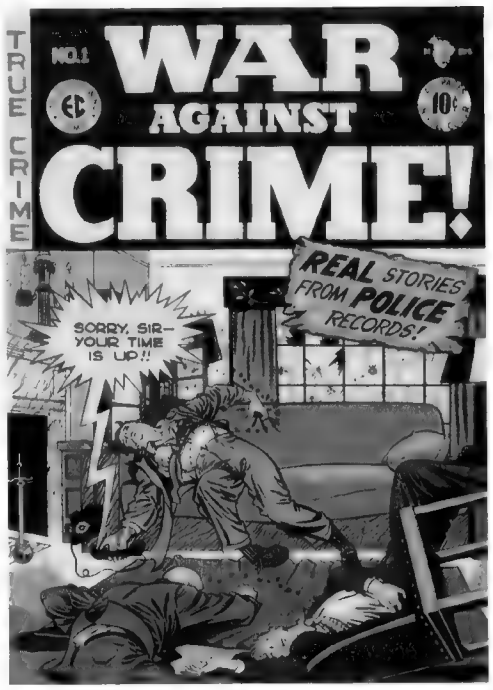
In the wake of the intense media furor over horror and crime comics in 1954—leading to the creation of the Comics Code Authority late that year—the seeds of what helped keep the comic book industry alive also were planted in 1948.

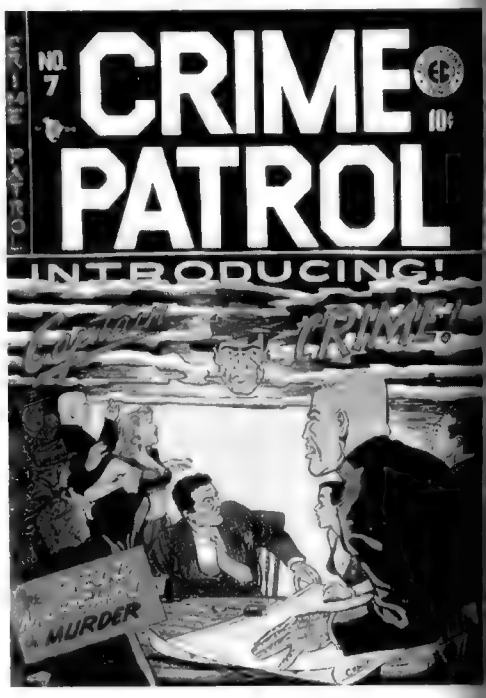
In that wonderful year, Dell Comics underwent a major expansion. Dell, of course, was the imprint under which Western Lithographing published its vast output of comic book material. Dell/Western began producing comics in the 1930s, but until 1948 most of the company's output consisted of funny animal anthologies and the *Four-Color* series.

Dell made a number of wonderfully prescient decisions in 1948, setting up the company for a decade of unsurpassed circulation success in the 1950s. The company began four monthly









titles that surely took their places among the top 25 sellers of the 1950s—*The Lone Ranger*, *Marge's Little Lulu*, *Roy Rogers* and *Tarzan*—and they remain among the best-loved comics of the Baby Boom generation. Virtually every American-born person in his or her 50s or 60s would have no trouble identifying all four of those characters.

Dell produced several other important first issues in 1948 (other than issues published under the *Four-Color* umbrella)—*Dick Tracy* (sold to Harvey in 1950), *Felix the Cat* (later one of the most popular Toby and Harvey titles), *Henry* and *Popeye*—which began the trend to a plethora of Dell first issues in the 1950s.

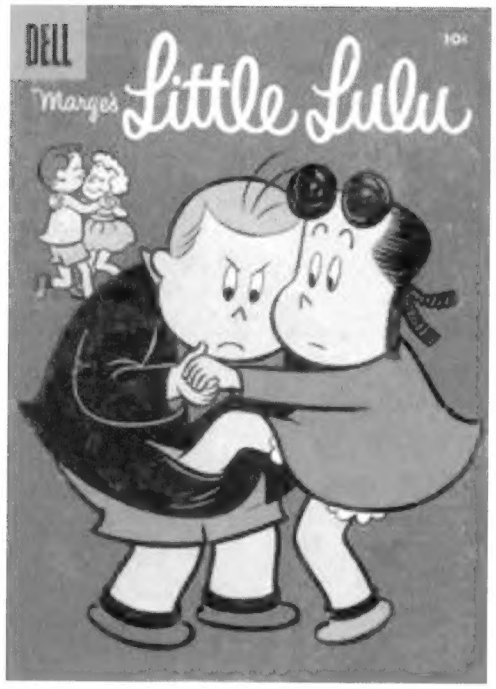
Meanwhile, Dell accurately assessed that Sunday strip reprint comics were on their way out by 1948. The first such to depart was *Popular Comics* with #145 (Jul/Sep 1948), which a dozen years earlier was Dell's first "modern" 10-cent newsstand title.

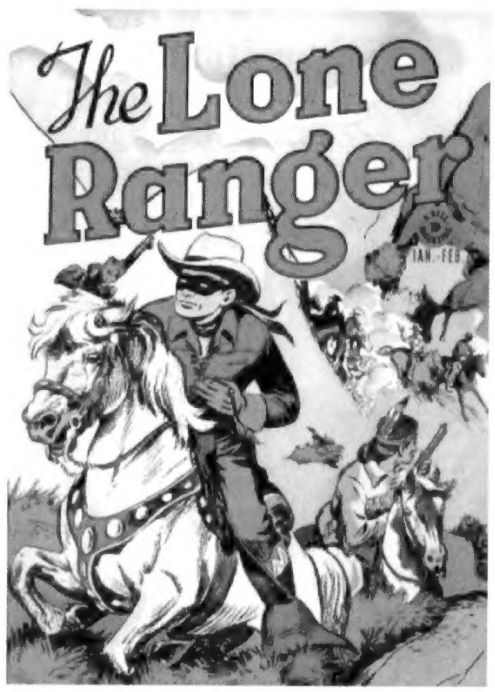
Dell, in fact, played a major role in a significant growth spurt for comics in 1948.

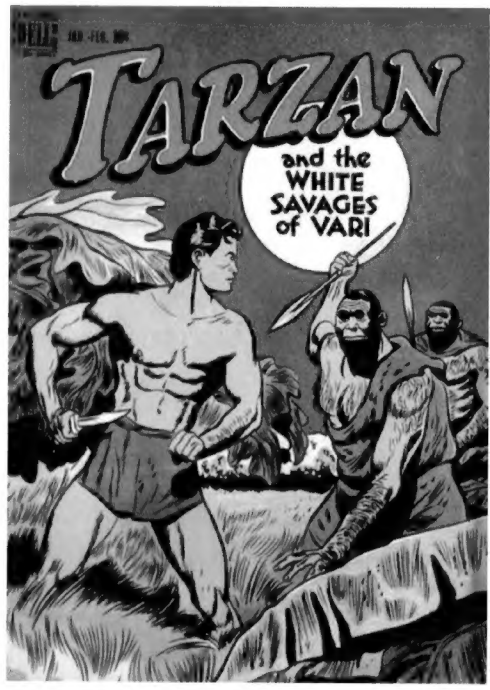
The total number of American newsstand comic books issued in 1948—when television sets had invaded only a fraction of American homes—took a leap of nearly 15 percent. The count, give or take a couple of issues that may not exist, went from 1,615 in 1947 (a record to that point) to 1,954 in 1948. The circulation of many titles took a hit in the mid-1950s, but the total number of newsstand issues published surpassed 2,000 every year until dropping to 1,908 in 1957, and 1,857 in 1958.

It wasn't until 1959, when only 1,512 newsstand issues were published, that the number fell below the 1947 count. (Thanks to comics historian Dan Stevenson and his remarkable database for the year-by-year totals.)

Clearly, 1948 set the stage for a decade of generally healthy sales of 10-cent comic books—if not sales that always pleased the publishers, considering the tumult of the mid-1950s. To put this into perspective, only about two dozen comic book titles today regularly sell more than 50,000 issues. Yet in 1948, nearly every issue of every comic book title sold well over 100,000 issues, and dozens sold at least a half-million issues.







Yes, the leading comic book characters still were super big in 1948, and few were bigger than Superman, who was introduced ten years earlier at the dawn of the Golden Age. Superman also hit the radio, cartoons and comic strips in his first ten years, but that was only a prelude to his success in the 1948-58 decade.

During that period, Superman appeared in movie serials (1948 and '50, starring Kirk Alyn), a short feature film (1951, starring George Reeves), and one of the most successful syndicated television series of all time (1953-57, starring Reeves). In addition, the only successful, long-running new super-hero comic books begun in that same time frame all starred members of the Superman franchise—*Superboy* (1949), *Jimmy Olsen* (1954) and *Lois Lane* (1958).

It's interesting to note that both Superman and Batman featured origin issues in 1948—*Superman* #53 (Jul/Aug) and *Batman* #47 (Jun/Jul). Wonder Woman, the other major survivor of DC's super-hero purge, was not similarly honored until #45 (Jan/Feb 1951). These three issues foreshadowed a decade of an increasingly complex mythology involving all three characters, with new wrinkles constantly appearing for the next two decades.

Action Comics #127 (Dec 1948) began Tommy Tomorrow, who earlier appeared in *Real Fact Comics* and was one of the few regularly published interplanetary strips outside the pages of Fiction House's *Planet Comics* in the late 1940s. And when Batman foe the Riddler made his debut in *Detective Comics* #140 (Oct 1948), he did not make an impact—but when he was brought back for the *Batman* TV show in 1966, he became a household villain.

Eleven bellwether titles of the 1940s published their last super-hero issues in 1948. Symbolically, four of them continued their numbering as Western titles—*All-American*, *Mary Marvel*, *Prize* and *Wow*. The others were *Blue Beetle* (which made a three-issue comeback in 1950), *Captain Midnight*, *Comic Cavalcade*, *Pep*, *Startling*, *Thrilling* and *Wonder*.

Captain Midnight suffered the most ignominious fate, with its conversion to *Sweethearts* #68, Fawcett's flagship romance title. Marvel and Fox also published their first romance comics in 1948 in the wake of Simon & Kirby's pioneering *Young Romance* for Prize in 1947. But the "love glut" would not begin in earnest until 1949.

Pep #65 (Feb 1948) marked the final appearance of the first patriotic hero, The Shield, and the end of the classic MLJ super-heroes. The company, of course, went on to greater glories with the Archie gang.

DC, then known as National, entered the Western market in earnest with *Western Comics* #1 (Jan/Feb 1948), *Dale Evans* #1 (Sept/Oct 1948) and *All-American Western* #103 (Nov 1948). Johnny Thunder, perhaps DC's best western character, debuted in *All-American* # 100 (Aug 1948). National also began two of the longest-running crime comics—*Gangbusters* #1 (Dec 1947-Jan 1948) and *Mr. District Attorney* #1 (Jan/Feb 1948), both of which lasted more than a decade.

Two of the most historically overlooked debuts of 1948 began wonderful western runs—Magazine Enterprise's *Tim Holt* #1 and Marvel's *Two-Gun Kid* #1. Marvel began several westerns that year, but *Two-Gun Kid* was by far the most successful. *Tim Holt*, meanwhile, began the highly collectible run of ME westerns, so well published and annotated by Bill Black at AC Comics and surely the best of all time as a group.

Fawcett also began going "great guns" with the first issues of *Tom Mix*, *Gabby Hayes*, *Monte Hale* (#29) and *Real Western Hero* (#70) joining *Hopalong Cassidy*. Many others were to follow in the Fawcett corral until the company's comic book division was shot down, with its final issues dated January 1954.

From a purely personal viewpoint, one other comic book-oriented product was "issued" in "That Wonderful Year" of 1948—me!

Book Review

by Stephen Barrington

OFFICIAL OVERSTREET GRADING GUIDE, by Robert M. Overstreet and Arnold T. Blumberg (2001: Gemstone Publishing, The Crown Publishing Group, New York) $24.00

After a ten-year wait, a new grading guide has hit the market. The last edition came out in 1992 and featured the 100-point grading system by Robert M. Overstreet and Gary Carter. This book, an attempt to establish grading guidelines, was never embraced by the mainstream collectors.

Some say it was too complicated, the definitions too broad and the black-and-white photos lacking in detail. The new edition, with its fabulous color pages and detailed interior articles, makes the first book primitive by comparison.

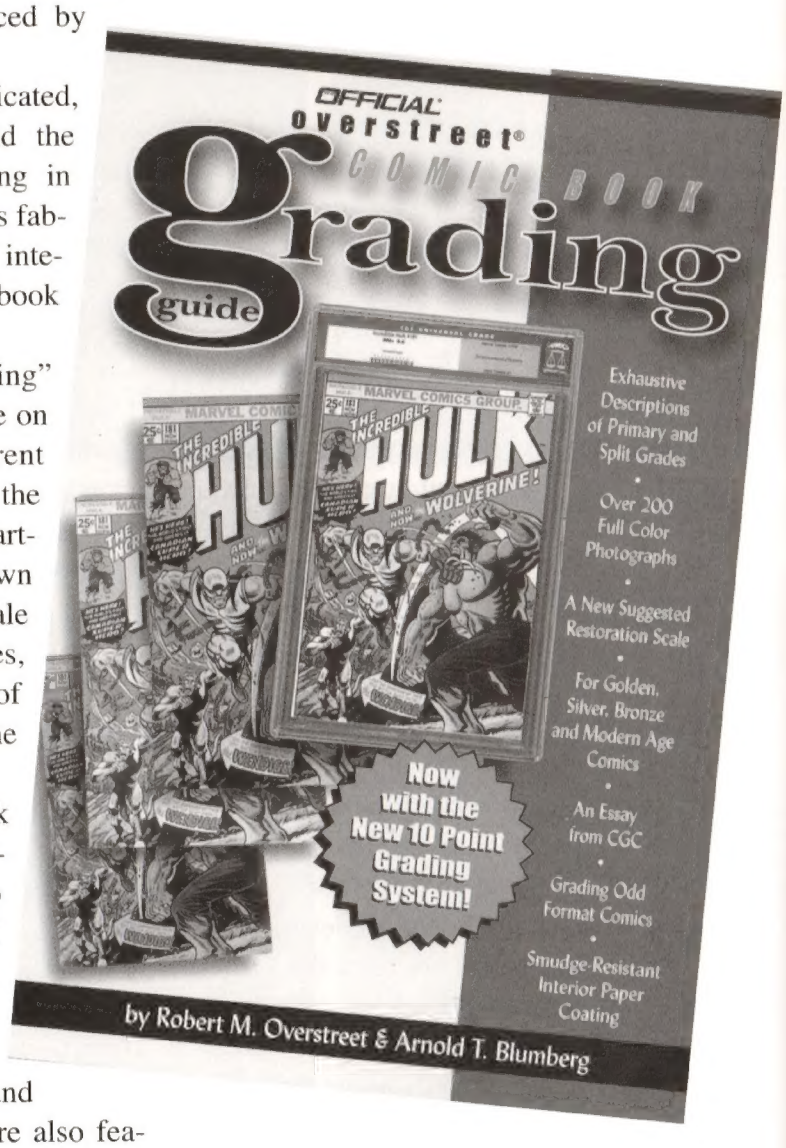
"The Evolution of Grading" gives the reader a crash course on early tries to define different grades. This is followed by the "10-Point Grading Scale," starting at 10.0 (Gem Mint) and down to 0.5 (Poor). Actually the scale features 25 numerical grades, including split grades. All of these are singled out with the use of color photos.

Other features in the book concern preservation and storage, shipping comics, how to grade a comic, restoration and a proposed scale for grading quality of restoration by Matt Nelson. Grading Victorian and Platinum Age books and grading odd format comics are also featured. "The Restoration of Comic Books: 1982-2002" by Susan Cicconi-Killiany of the Restoration Lab, is a must-read section of this guide as well as "Comic Book Certification: An Overview of Comics Guaranty, LLC," by Steve Borock.

Each grade begins with its definition (including paper quality and interior) and has a detailed list of what is allowed and not allowed. This is followed by several examples of comics in that particular grade.

All 25 grades are presented. This can be problematic, however, as dealers may agree or disagree with the grading guidelines. I'm sure many will embrace this guide but you're not going to please everyone since some will think the book is either too liberal or too conservative.

Overall, it's an excellent book and collectors and dealers alike should take advantage of this obviously well-done and meticulously detailed edition.



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